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THE

BROKEN SHAFT.

TALES IN MID-OCEAN.

EDITED BY

HENRY NORMAN.

"Whimsies of wantons and stories of dread,
To make the stout-hearted look under the bed."

LANDOR.

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ON BOARD THE "BAVARIA."

By THE EDITOR.

The good ship *Bavaria* lay at anchor in Queenstown Harbor waiting for the mails, and only the little cloud of white steam curling from her escape-pipe gave sign of the huge forces hidden beneath her placid exterior. Her decks were almost deserted, for her passengers had yielded as usual to that ridiculous fascination of a few more hours on land, which forms apparently the staple industry of the city of Queenstown, and is probably responsible for more sea-sickness than all other causes put together. But the Eminent Tragedian was far too wary to leave the ship at the one moment of the whole fortnight when her decks were reasonably still, and as he leaned over the rail of the upper deck and watched the little waves lapping musically round the black sides of the great Liner, he was almost the only figure visible. He took off his eye-glasses, wiped them, and replaced them with admirable accuracy. He removed his peaked cap for a moment, and ran his long, graceful fingers through his hair. He drew a dainty cigarette-case from his pocket, lighted a cigarette, and,

thrusting his hands deep into the pockets of his thick pea-jacket, he wedged himself comfortably between the life-boat and the rail, and gave himself up to general reflections, which doubtless proved as pleasing to him as they must to any man who neither remembers nor contemplates anything but success.

So comfortable did he find himself in his new corner, and so entertaining or profitable did his meditations prove, that he was not a little displeased to notice some footsteps passing beneath him on the lower deck, and turning toward the companion-ladder. A moment later a pleasant baritone voice broke out carelessly with Lover's old song, suggested naturally by the last glimpse of Erin—

> What will you do, love, when I am going,
> With white sails flowing, the seas beyond?

and the Eminent Tragedian had hardly time to discover whether he was more pleased by the voice or amused by the words, before the head of the singer appeared above the deck. It was that of a young man of perhaps thirty, with rather long, fair hair, and a slight, drooping mustache. He mounted the ladder with quick steps, still happily singing, and had just got to the second verse—

> What would you do, love, when home returning,
> With hopes high burning, with wealth for you—

when his eye fell on the Eminent Tragedian wedged in the corner. He stopped short, and seemed for a moment

on the point of sliding down the ladder out of sight; for they had met often before, but always as Critic and criticised, with the deceitful glare of the footlights between them. His embarrassment, however, passed away as quickly as it had come, and, stepping upon the deck, with the ease of a well-traveled man, he lifted his hat to the Eminent Tragedian, whom, although he had never met before, he felt instantly that it would be both absurd and unmannerly for him to pretend not to know, and expressed formally but deferentially his pleasure at this unlooked-for meeting. The Eminent Tragedian, who had felt a greater embarrassment, though he had showed none, was still more courteous, as became his more distinguished position, in reciprocating these expressions, and added, with more than enough politeness to cover the sarcasm, "I venture to anticipate, sir, much profit from this meeting." There was an awkward pause, and both men looked up at the rigging. The younger man lowered his eyes after a moment, to find the other one's gaze fixed upon him with an amused expression, and the first signs of a smile hovering about his lips. Their eyes met, and, as if by some pre-established harmony of humor, they burst simultaneously into a hearty laugh. "My dear fellow," exclaimed the Tragedian, extending his hand cordially, "I am really delighted to make your acquaintance; I dare say I shall learn something from meeting you, and who knows but you may unlearn something from knowing me. Won't you finish that song?"

Under the circumstances hardly any request could have been refused; but the conversation was interrupted by a shriek from the whistle of the tug-boat bringing the returning passengers and the mails from Queenstown, which had drawn almost alongside unnoticed.

The two men leaned upon the rail side by side, and scrutinized their approaching fellow-travelers for some minutes in silence. "We shall be a small party," remarked the Eminent Tragedian at length. "I have two old friends among them, but the rest are strangers to me. Who, for instance, is that big, athletic-looking fellow with the deep-set eyes and short brown beard? A Frenchman, evidently." "No more a Frenchman," replied the Critic, "than an American, or an Italian, or, for the matter of that, a Hindoo. He is the Novelist, you know, who began with the story of Allahabad, and went from there to Rome, and then to Boston, and now I believe he has just done with Persia. An extraordinary fellow, so I've been told—began by trudging on foot through all the dangerous districts of Italy disguised as a peasant, with a knife in his boot, and picking up the dialects as he passed along. Then he edited a newspaper in India, and learned Hindustani and magic. A man with half a dozen mother-tongues, who was just about to settle down in life as a professor of classical philology, when he discovered that fiction was his strong point. I don't know him myself, but we have a common friend on board—that dark fellow in the long yellow ulster, on

the paddle-box, rolling a cigarette—and he has told me all about him. They were both special correspondents bound for the same part of the world, and they met at Niagara. They went together to see the Falls by moonlight, and climbed out on to a big bowlder overhanging the edge of the Horseshoe Fall. Fascinated by the moonlight and the marvelous lunar bow, they sat there for an hour or two in the roar of the cataract, till at last my friend dropped off to sleep, and was quietly slipping over the edge of the rock, when the Novelist yonder happened to look round just in time to catch him by the collar."

"Dear me," said the Tragedian; "how interesting! We must make him tell us some of his stories. Ah, there's my old friend the Editor—that tall, fair man, with the pointed beard. You know him?" "By name, well," replied the other, "not otherwise." "Then I envy you the pleasure in store. A fine fellow: yes, 'fine' is exactly the word that describes him—a man with a mind as bright and supple as his own rapier"; and the Tragedian made a gesture with a quick turn of the wrist that recalled *Hamlet's* palpable hit. "Now, there's an interesting figure—that tall, bent man with the long dark hair and pale face, coming out of the cabin, wrapped up as if we were in the Arctic Circle. I wonder who he is."

"I know him," replied the Critic instantly. "He is a living mystery of literature. An invalid himself, he

produces book after book filled with the very spirit of health, books which give you the physical tonic of a gallop across the fields in the morning, and thrill you like a plunge in the deep sea. The first prose-writer of our time—I don't quite mean that, of course, but certainly the first Romancer. Nobody else can throw such a halo of interesting personality round a poor little she-donkey, or make a child's toy-boat with its penny cannon in the bow so significant and pathetic an emblem of the most touching aspect of human life, or take the absurdly impossible and transmute it by his imagination into something so real that, as soon as any one has read it, it passes into an episode of his own life."

And so they chatted pleasantly, the Eminent Tragedian and his Critic, discussing their fellow-passengers, while the great brown sacks of letters were carried on board one by one on the backs of hurrying sailors. Some of the travelers were friends and some were strangers, some were famous and some were unknown. Last of all came an elastic figure over the swinging gangway and along the deck, with a buoyant step and a breezy laugh. The winds snatched the yellow locks from under her navy-blue cap, and the trim pilot-jacket with brass buttons gave a bewildering nautical air to the form which is associated in every one's mind with *Portia* and *Ophelia* and, sweetest of all, with *Beatrice*. Nothing she wore comes within the limits of intelli-

gible description. Her drapery was a law unto itself, so fearfully and wonderfully was it made, but woe to the woman who should imagine that she could wear similar raiment with the same irresistible grace. Nor did this wonderful figure advance like an ordinary mortal. Whether it was a walk, or a slide, or an undulation, or a kind of swimming, nobody could determine —certainly not the taciturn old Captain, who gazed and gazed, and at last fervently murmured, "Bless my soul!" as he turned to give the order which swung the head of the *Bavaria* round toward the red west, and sent her plowing through the great waters to the New World.

. . . . . .

Four days later it was again evening, and the deep glow of an ocean sunset was pouring in obliquely through the open port-holes in the saloon of the *Bavaria*. It was reflected backward and forward in broad beams from the great mirrors, and it sparkled in points of gold on the glass and silver hanging over the heads of the passengers as they sat at dinner. At the head of the table, on the port side of the vessel, sat the Captain, at his right hand *Beatrice*, and at his left the Eminent Tragedian. Near them were the Editor, the Novelist, the Romancer, the Critic, and half a dozen other congenial spirits whom Providence, in the shape of the Purser, had brought together for company. They knew one another well by this time, and all the old sea-jokes went round, and many a new and merry story

and good thrust. But as all roads lead to Rome, so all conversations on shipboard have one conclusion. Whatever beginning a conversation may have—personal, meteorological, anecdotal, gastronomic—it always ends in an interchange of ideas on the probable date of arrival in port, and this momentous subject was regularly reached by the party on the *Bavaria* each day with the dessert. "For myself," the Novelist was saying, "I should welcome delay; these are full days for me," and he made a note on his cuff. "'Tis time elaborately thrown away," said the Critic. "I have often noticed," remarked the Romancer, "that the farther one is from land, the nearer one is to one's fellows. Far be the land from us—*procul profani!*" "Don't!" exclaimed *Beatrice;* "it sounds like a spell. I'm horribly superstitious, and when Fido barks in his sleep I always know something unpleasant is going to happen." "'Il faut avoir sa malle prête,'" quoted the Editor. "'I have great comfort from this fellow,'" said the Eminent Tragedian, lifting his glass politely to the Captain, with a calm assurance that there was no danger of the weather-beaten seaman being able to finish the quotation. "'Methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him.'" "Oh, don't, don't; I will leave the table!" cried *Beatrice.* "Four days from now," interposed the Captain with authority, "we shall be off the Hook, and next morning you will be seeing one of the prettiest sights of your life—an early morning sail up New York Harbor. I know

nothing like it—except the grimy wharf at Liverpool when the wife and bairns are watching for me. Four days from to-morrow morning—that is," he added, for, like all sailors, he could not resist his gruesome joke, "unless Davy Jones himself—"

Nobody ever knew exactly how it happened. The Captain was half-way up the companion-way, and the Tragedian was picking a champagne bottle out of *Beatrice's* lap, before they realized that anything had occurred. Afterward they understood it all: how the Captain's words had been cut short by a tremendous jar which upset everything on the table, and sent the plates and wine-glasses spinning about in all directions, and brought down the cruets with a crash from the hooks overhead; how the Captain had dropped his knife and fork, and was almost on deck before they knew he had gone, and how there had come a great deafening blow, shaking the whole ship from stem to stern, then a moment's utter silence, worse even than the noise, and then another sickening blow, as if some giant of the deep had picked up the vessel and flung her down at his feet. Then all was still, except the lap—lap—lap of the waves as they flew by. Most of the passengers rushed helter-skelter to the doors, but the party at the Captain's table did not wholly lose their wits. The Editor, the Romancer, and the Critic sprang to their feet, and looked at one another without a word; the Tragedian turned instantly to support *Beatrice*, who, with a little

subdued shriek, was about to faint, when her eyes fell upon the Novelist opposite. He was seated impassively, with the long neck of a bottle of sherry sticking out of one of his capacious pockets, busily engaged in filling the other with whatever eatables he could lay his hands upon. So she only burst into a peal of that merry child-like laughter which so many love to hear, and, after a minute, they all joined the crowd hurrying up the stairs. They reached the deck at the same moment as the Captain, who was returning quietly from the bridge. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "don't be alarmed; there is not the slightest danger. We have only broken our shaft!"

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So the Captain's prophecy did not come true. Four days from the eventful evening when the breaking of the shaft interrupted the company at dinner, Sandy Hook was as far off as ever, and the *Bavaria* was lying-to, with just enough sail spread to keep her head to the wind—what there was of it—which had blown persistently from the wrong quarter. For four days she had been drifting about, a great iron coal-freighted hulk, now a few miles one way and now the other; but except the delay, her passengers had suffered no inconvenience. The novelty of being helplessly becalmed, however, had worn off after a few hours, and a dull, leaden *ennui* had settled down upon them. Without wind, and plenty of it, there is no good spirits on board ship; without move-

ment in the vessel there is none in the veins of the passengers. As the evening was closing on the fourth day the same group was gathered together on the lee side of the deck-houses, silent, ill-tempered, bored to death. In the center *Beatrice* was reclining in a steamer-chair, enveloped in rugs from neck to feet, and her face hidden by a thick veil. On one side of her stood the Eminent Tragedian, on the other the Editor, and round them were stretched upon the deck in a variety of unconventionally comfortable attitudes the Romancer, the Critic, and the Novelist. The last-named was deeply engrossed in the congenial task of translating "Der König in Thule" into classical Greek. He had rendered most of it to his satisfaction, and was beginning the last verse, when he was suddenly interrupted by the voice of the Tragedian addressing him. "How absurd not to have thought of it before! My dear sir, when I saw you coming aboard and heard of your wonderful experiences, I promised myself that on the very first opportunity I would summon you, in the name of our party, to put some of them in narrative form for us. That opportunity is here—night, moonlight, this mysterious and inspiring expanse of silvery water—all nature is propitious, and your listeners are eager. Your memory and your portfolio must be full of thrilling stories. Come—'an honest tale speeds best.'" Before the Novelist had time to say a word, the Tragedian's request was backed by the others with such instant unanimity,

that, when the chorus of entreaty had ceased, excuse was no longer possible. He hesitated for a few moments only, then drawing himself up till his back rested comfortably against the deck-house, and arranging himself carefully in his rug, he lighted a cigarette, and told the following tale:

THE UPPER BERTH.*

By F. MARION CRAWFORD.

Somebody asked for the cigars. We had talked long, and the conversation was beginning to languish; the tobacco-smoke had got into the heavy curtains, the wine had got into those brains which were liable to become heavy, and it was already perfectly evident that, unless somebody did something to rouse our oppressed spirits, the meeting would soon come to its natural conclusion, and we, the guests, would speedily go home to bed, and most certainly to sleep. No one had said anything very remarkable; it may be that no one had anything very remarkable to say. Jones had given us every particular of his last hunting-adventure in Yorkshire. Mr. Tompkins, of Boston, had explained at elaborate length those working principles, by the due and careful maintenance of which the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé Railroad not only extended its territory, increased its departmental influence, and transported live-stock without starving them to death before the day of actual de-

livery, but also had for years succeeded in deceiving those passengers who bought its tickets into the fallacious belief that the corporation aforesaid was really able to transport human life without destroying it. Signor Tombola had endeavored to persuade us, by arguments which we took no trouble to oppose, that the unity of his country in no way resembled the average modern torpedo, carefully planned, constructed with all the skill of the greatest European arsenals, but, when constructed, destined to be directed by feeble hands into a region where it must undoubtedly explode, unseen, unfeared, and unheard, into the illimitable wastes of political chaos.

It is unnecessary to go into further details. The conversation had assumed proportions which would have bored Prometheus on his rock, which would have driven Tantalus to distraction, and which would have impelled Ixion to seek relaxation in the simple but instructive dialogues of Herr Ollendorff, rather than submit to the greater evil of listening to our talk. We had sat at our table for hours; we were bored, we were tired, and nobody showed signs of moving.

Somebody called for cigars. We all instinctively looked toward the speaker. Brisbane was a man of five-and-thirty years of age, and remarkable for those gifts which chiefly attract the attention of men. He was a strong man. The external proportions of his figure presented nothing extraordinary to the common eye, though

his size was above the average. He was a little over six feet in height, and moderately broad in the shoulder; he did not appear to be stout, but, on the other hand, he was certainly not thin; his small head was supported by a strong and sinewy neck; his broad muscular hands appeared to possess a peculiar skill in breaking walnuts without the assistance of the ordinary cracker, and, seeing him in profile, one could not help remarking the extraordinary breadth of his sleeves, and the unusual thickness of his chest. He was one of those men who are commonly spoken of among men as deceptive; that is to say, that though he looked exceedingly strong he was in reality very much stronger than he looked. Of his features I need say little. His head is small, his hair is thin, his eyes are blue, his nose is large, he has a small mustache, and a square jaw. Everybody knows Brisbane, and when he asked for a cigar everybody looked at him.

"It is a very singular thing," said Brisbane.

Everybody stopped talking. Brisbane's voice was not loud, but possessed a peculiar quality of penetrating general conversation, and cutting it like a knife. Everybody listened. Brisbane, perceiving that he had attracted their general attention, lit his cigar with great equanimity.

"It is very singular," he continued, "that thing about ghosts. People are always asking whether anybody has seen a ghost. I have."

"Bosh! What, you? You don't mean to say so, Brisbane? Well, for a man of his intelligence!"

A chorus of exclamations greeted Brisbane's remarkable statement. Everybody called for cigars, and Stubbs the butler suddenly appeared from the depths of nowhere with a fresh bottle of dry champagne. The situation was saved; Brisbane was going to tell a story.

I am an old sailor (said Brisbane), and as I have to cross the Atlantic pretty often, I have my favorites. Most men have their favorites. I have seen a man wait in a Broadway bar for three quarters of an hour for a particular car which he liked. I believe the bar-keeper made at least one third of his living by that man's preference. I have a habit of waiting for certain ships when I am obliged to cross that duck-pond. It may be a prejudice, but I was never cheated out of a good passage but once in my life. I remember it very well; it was a warm morning in June, and the Custom House officials, who were hanging about waiting for a steamer already on her way up from the Quarantine, presented a peculiarly hazy and thoughtful appearance. I had not much luggage—I never have. I mingled with the crowd of passengers, porters, and officious individuals in blue coats and brass buttons, who seemed to spring up like mushrooms from the deck of a moored steamer to obtrude their unnecessary services upon the independent pas-

senger. I have often noticed with a certain interest the spontaneous evolution of these fellows. They are not there when you arrive; five minutes after the pilot has called "Go a-head!" they, or at least their blue coats and brass buttons, have disappeared from deck and gangway as completely as though they had been consigned to that locker which tradition unanimously ascribes to Davy Jones. But, at the moment of starting, they are there, clean-shaved, blue-coated, and ravenous for fees. I hastened on board. The *Kamtschatka* was one of my favorite ships. I say was, because she emphatically no longer is. I can not conceive of any inducement which could entice me to make another voyage in her. Yes, I know what you are going to say. She is uncommonly clean in the run aft, she has enough bluffing off in the bows to keep her dry, and the lower berths are most of them double. She has a lot of advantages, but I won't cross in her again. Excuse the digression. I got on board. I hailed a steward, whose red nose and redder whiskers were equally familiar to me.

"One hundred and five, lower berth," said I, in the business-like tone peculiar to men who think no more of crossing the Atlantic than taking a whisky cocktail at down-town Delmonico's.

The steward took my portmanteau, great coat, and rug. I shall never forget the expression of his face. Not that he turned pale. It is maintained by the most eminent divines that even miracles can not change the

course of nature. I have no hesitation in saying that he did not turn pale; but, from his expression, I judged that he was either about to shed tears, to sneeze, or to drop my portmanteau. As the latter contained two bottles of particularly fine old sherry presented to me for my voyage by my old friend Snigginson van Pickyns, I felt extremely nervous. But the steward did none of these things.

"Well, I am d——d!" said he, in a low voice, and led the way.

I supposed my Hermes, as he led me to the lower regions, had had a little grog, but I said nothing, and followed him. 105 was on the port side, well aft. There was nothing remarkable about the state-room. The lower berth, like most of those upon the *Kamtschatka*, was double. There was plenty of room; there was the usual washing-apparatus, calculated to convey an idea of luxury to the mind of a North American Indian; there were the usual inefficient racks of brown wood, in which it is more easy to hang a large-sized umbrella than the common tooth-brush of commerce. Upon the uninviting mattresses were carefully folded together those blankets which a great modern humorist has aptly compared to cold buckwheat cakes. The question of towels was left entirely to the imagination. The glass decanters were filled with a transparent liquid faintly tinged with brown, but from which an odor less faint, but not more pleasing, ascended to the nostrils, like a far-off sea-sick reminiscence of oily

machinery. Sad-colored curtains half-closed the upper berth. The hazy June daylight shed a faint illumination upon the desolate little scene. Ugh! how I hate that state-room.

The steward deposited my traps and looked at me, as though he wanted to get away—probably in search of more passengers and more fees. It is always a good plan to start in favor with those functionaries, and I accordingly gave him certain coins there and then.

"I'll try and make yer comfortable all I can," he remarked, as he put the coins in his pocket. Nevertheless, there was a doubtful intonation in his voice which surprised me. Possibly his scale of fees had gone up, and he was not satisfied; but on the whole I was inclined to think that, as he himself would have expressed it, he was "the better for a glass." I was wrong, however, and did the man injustice.

Nothing especially worthy of mention occurred during that day. We left the pier punctually, and it was very pleasant to be fairly underway, for the weather was warm and sultry, and the motion of the steamer produced a refreshing breeze. Everybody knows what the first day at sea is like. People pace the decks and stare at each other, and occasionally meet acquaintances whom they did not know to be on board. There is the usual uncertainty as to whether the food will be good, bad, or indifferent, until the first two meals have put the matter beyond a doubt; there is the usual uncertainty about

the weather, until the ship is fairly off Fire Island. The tables are crowded at first, and then suddenly thinned. Pale-faced people spring from their seats and precipitate themselves toward the door, and each old sailor breathes more freely as his sea-sick neighbor rushes from his side, leaving him plenty of elbow-room and an unlimited command over the mustard.

One passage across the Atlantic is very much like another, and we who cross very often do not make the voyage for the sake of novelty. Whales and icebergs are indeed always objects of interest, but, after all, one whale is very much like another whale, and one rarely sees an iceberg at close quarters. To the majority of us the most delightful moment of the day on board an ocean steamer is when we have taken our last turn on deck, have smoked our last cigar, and having succeeded in tiring ourselves, feel at liberty to turn in with a clear conscience. On that first night of the voyage I felt particularly lazy and went to bed in 105 rather earlier than I usually do. As I turned in I was amazed to see that I was to have a companion. A portmanteau, very like my own, lay in the opposite corner, and in the upper berth had been deposited a neatly folded rug with a stick and umbrella. I had hoped to be alone, and I was disappointed; but I wondered who my room-mate was to be, and I determined to have a look at him.

Before I had been long in bed he entered. He was, as far as I could see, a very tall man, very thin, very

pale, with sandy hair and whiskers and colorless gray eyes. He had about him, I thought, an air of rather dubious fashion; the sort of man you might see in Wall Street, without being able precisely to say what he was doing there—the sort of man who frequents the Café Anglais, who always seems to be alone, and who drinks champagne; you might meet him on a race-course, but he would never appear to be doing anything there either. A little over-dressed—a little odd. There are three or four of his kind on every ocean steamer. I made up my mind that I did not care to make his acquaintance, and I went to sleep saying to myself that I would study his habits in order to avoid him. If he rose early, I would rise late; if he went to bed late, I would go to bed early. I did not care to know him. If you once know people of that kind they are always turning up. Poor fellow! I need not have taken the trouble to come to so many decisions about him, for I never saw him again after that first night in 105.

I was sleeping soundly when I was suddenly waked by a loud noise. To judge from the sound my room-mate must have sprung with a single leap from the upper berth to the floor. I heard him fumbling with the latch and bolt of the door, which opened almost immediately, and then I heard his footsteps as he ran at full speed down the passage, leaving the door open behind him. The ship was rolling a little and I expected to hear him stumble or fall, but he ran as though he

was running for his life. The door swung on its hinges with the motion of the vessel, and the sound annoyed me. I got up and shut it, and groped my way back to my berth in the darkness. I went to sleep again; but I have no idea how long I slept.

When I awoke it was still quite dark, but I felt a disagreeable sensation of cold, and it seemed to me that the air was damp. You know the peculiar smell of a cabin which has been wet with sea water. I covered myself up as well as I could and dozed off again, framing complaints to be made the next day, and selecting the most powerful epithets in the language. I could hear my room-mate turn over in the upper berth. He had probably returned while I was asleep. Once I thought I heard him groan, and I argued that he was sea-sick. That is particularly unpleasant when one is below. Nevertheless I dozed off and slept till early daylight.

The ship was rolling heavily, much more than on the previous evening, and the gray light which came in through the port-hole changed in tint with every movement according as the angle of the vessel's side turned the glass seaward or skyward. It was very cold—unaccountably so for the month of June. I turned my head and looked at the port-hole, and saw to my surprise that it was wide open and hooked back. I believe I swore audibly. Then I got up and shut it. As I turned back I glanced at the upper berth. The curtains were drawn close together; my companion had probably felt cold as

well as I. It struck me that I had slept enough. The state-room was uncomfortable; though, strange to say, I could not smell the dampness which had annoyed me in the night. My room-mate was still asleep—excellent opportunity for avoiding him; so I dressed at once and went on deck. The day was warm and cloudy, with an oily smell on the water. It was seven o'clock as I came out—much later than I had imagined. I came across the doctor, who was taking his first sniff of the morning air. He was a young man from the west of Ireland—a tremendous fellow, with black hair and blue eyes, already inclined to be stout; he had a happy-go-lucky, healthy look about him which was rather attractive.

"Fine morning," I remarked, by way of introduction.

"Well," said he, eying me with an air of ready interest, "it's a fine morning and it's not a fine morning. I don't think that it's much of a morning."

"Well, no—it is not so very fine," said I.

"It's just what I call fuggly weather," replied the doctor.

"It was very cold last night, I thought," I remarked. "However, when I looked about, I found that the port-hole was wide open. I had not noticed it when I went to bed. And the state-room was damp, too."

"Damp!" said he. "Whereabouts are you?"

"One hundred and five—"

To my surprise the doctor started visibly, and stared at me.

"What is the matter?" I asked, blandly.

"Oh—nothing," he answered; "only everybody has complained of that state-room for the last three trips."

"I shall complain too," I said. "It has certainly not been properly aired. It is a shame!"

"I don't believe it can be helped," answered the doctor. "I believe there is something—well, it is not my business to frighten passengers."

"You need not be afraid of frightening me," I replied. "I can stand any amount of damp. If I should get a bad cold I will come to you."

I offered the doctor a cigar, which he took and examined very critically.

"It is not so much the damp," he remarked. "However, I dare say you will get on very well. Have you a room-mate?"

"Yes; a deuce of a fellow, who bolts out in the middle of the night and leaves the door open."

Again the doctor glanced curiously at me. Then he lit the cigar and looked grave.

"Did he come back?" he asked presently.

"Yes. I was asleep, but I waked up and heard him moving. Then I felt cold and went to sleep again. This morning I found the port-hole open."

"Look here," said the doctor, quietly, "I don't care much for this ship. I don't care a rap for her reputation. I tell you what I will do. I have a good-sized

place up here. I will share it with you, though I don't know you from Adam."

I was very much suprised at the proposition. I could not imagine why he should take such a sudden interest in my welfare. However, his manner as he spoke of the ship was peculiar.

"You are very good, doctor," I said. "But, really, I believe even now the cabin could be aired, or cleaned out, or something. Why do not you care for the ship?"

"We are not superstitious in our profession, sir," replied the doctor. "But the sea makes people so. I don't want to prejudice you, and I don't want to frighten you, but if you take my advice you will move in here. I would as soon see you overboard," he added, earnestly, "as know that you or any other man was to sleep in 105."

"Good gracious! Why?" I asked.

"Just because on the last three trips the people who have slept there actually have gone overboard," he answered, gravely.

The intelligence was startling and exceedingly unpleasant, I confess. I looked hard at the doctor to see whether he was making game of me; but he looked perfectly serious. I thanked him warmly for his offer, but told him I intended to be the exception to the rule by which every one who slept in that particular state-room went overboard. He did not say much, but looked as grave as ever, and hinted that before we got across I

should probably reconsider his proposal. In the course of time we went to breakfast, at which only an inconsiderable number of passengers assembled. I noticed that one or two of the officers who breakfasted with us looked grave. After breakfast I went into my state-room in order to get a book. The curtains of the upper berth were still closely drawn. Not a word was to be heard. My room-mate was probably still asleep.

As I came out I met the steward whose business it was to look after me. He whispered that the captain wanted to see me, and then scuttled away down the passage as if very anxious to avoid any questions. I went toward the captain's cabin, and found him waiting for me.

"Sir," said he, "I want to ask a favor of you."

I answered that I would do anything to oblige him.

"Your room-mate has disappeared," he said. "He is known to have turned in early last night. Did you notice anything extraordinary in his manner?"

The question coming, as it did, in exact confirmation of the fears the doctor had expressed half an hour earlier, staggered me.

"You don't mean to say he has gone overboard?" I asked.

"I fear he has," answered the captain.

"This is the most extraordinary thing—" I began.

"Why?" he asked.

"He is the fourth, then?" I explained.

In answer to another question from the captain, I explained, without mentioning the doctor, that I had heard the story concerning 105. He seemed very much annoyed at hearing that I knew of it. I told him what had occurred in the night.

"What you say," he replied, "coincides almost exactly with what was told me by the room-mates of two of the other three. They bolt out of bed and run down the passage. Two of them were seen to go overboard by the watch; we stopped and lowered boats, but they were not found. Nobody, however, saw or heard the man who was lost last night—if he is really lost. The steward, who is a superstitious fellow, perhaps, and expected something to go wrong, went to look for him this morning, and found his berth empty, but his clothes lying about, just as he had left them. The steward was the only man on board who knew him by sight, and he has been searching everywhere for him. He has disappeared! Now, sir, I want to beg you not to mention the circumstance to any of the passengers; I don't want the ship to get a bad name, and nothing hangs about an ocean-goer like stories of suicides. You shall have your choice of any one of the officers' cabins you like, including my own, for the rest of the passage. Is that a fair bargain?"

"Very," said I; "I am much obliged to you. But since I am alone, and have the state-room to myself, I would rather not move. If the steward would take out

that unfortunate man's things, I would as lief stay where I am. I will not say anything about the matter, and I think I can promise you that I will not follow my room-mate."

The captain tried to dissuade me from my intention, but I preferred having a state-room alone to being the chum of any officer on board. I do not know whether I acted foolishly, but if I had taken his advice I should have had nothing more to tell. There would have remained the disagreeable coincidence of several suicides occurring among men who had slept in the same cabin, but that would have been all.

That was not the end of the matter, however, by any means. I obstinately made up my mind that I would not be disturbed by such tales, and I even went so far as to argue the question with the captain. There was something wrong about the state-room, I said. It was rather damp. The port-hole had been left open last night. My room-mate might have been ill when he came on board, and he might have become delirious after he went to bed. He might even now be hiding somewhere on board, and might be found later. The place ought to be aired and the fastening of the port looked to. If the captain would give me leave I would see that what I thought necessary were done immediately.

"Of course you have a right to stay where you are if you please," he replied, rather petulantly; "but I wish

you would turn out and let me lock the place up, and be done with it."

I did not see it in the same light, and left the captain after promising to be silent concerning the disappearance of my companion. The latter had had no acquaintances on board, and was not missed in the course of the day. Toward evening I met the doctor again, and he asked me whether I had changed my mind. I told him I had not.

"Then you will before long," he said, very gravely.

We played whist in the evening, and I went to bed late. I will confess now that I felt a disagreeable sensation when I entered my state-room. I could not help thinking of the tall man I had seen on the previous night, who was now dead, drowned, tossing about in the long swell, two or three hundred miles astern. His face rose very distinctly before me as I undressed, and I even went so far as to draw back the curtains of the upper berth, as though to persuade myself that he was actually gone. I also bolted the door of the state-room. Suddenly I became aware that the port-hole was open, and fastened back. This was more than I could stand. I hastily threw on my dressing-gown and went in search of Robert, the steward of my passage. I was very angry, I remember, and when I found him I dragged him roughly to the door of 105, and pushed him toward the open port-hole.

"What the deuce do you mean, you scoundrel, by leaving that port open every night? Do you know it is against the regulations? Do you know that if the ship heeled and the water began to come in, ten men could not shut it? I will report you to the captain, you blackguard, for endangering the ship!"

I was exceedingly wroth. The man trembled and turned pale, and then began to shut the round glass plate with the heavy brass fittings.

"Why don't you answer me?" I said, roughly.

"If you please, sir," faltered Robert, "there's nobody on board as can keep this 'ere port shut at night. You can try it yourself, sir. I ain't a-going to stop hany longer on board o' this vessel, sir; I ain't, indeed. But if I was you, sir, I'd just clear out and go and sleep with the surgeon, or something, I would. Look 'ere, sir, is that fastened what you may call securely, or not, sir? Try it, sir, see if it will move a hinch."

I tried the port, and found it perfectly tight.

"Well, sir," continued Robert, triumphantly, "I wager my reputation as a A1 steward, that in 'arf an hour it will be open again; fastened back, too, sir, that's the horful thing—fastened back!"

I examined the great screw and the looped nut that ran on it.

"If I find it open in the night, Robert, I will give you a sovereign. It is not possible. You may go."

"Soverin' did you say, sir? Very good, sir. Thank

ye, sir. Good-night, sir. Pleasant reepose, sir, and all manner of hinchantin' dreams, sir."

Robert scuttled away, delighted at being released. Of course, I thought he was trying to account for his negligence by a silly story, intended to frighten me, and I disbelieved him. The consequence was that he got his sovereign, and I spent a very peculiarly unpleasant night.

I went to bed, and five minutes after I had rolled myself up in my blankets the inexorable Robert extinguished the light that burned steadily behind the ground-glass pane near the door. I lay quite still in the dark trying to go to sleep, but I soon found that impossible. It had been some satisfaction to be angry with the steward, and the diversion had banished that unpleasant sensation I had at first experienced when I thought of the drowned man who had been my chum; but I was no longer sleepy, and I lay awake for some time, occasionally glancing at the port-hole, which I could just see from where I lay, and which, in the darkness, looked like a faintly-luminous soup-plate suspended in blackness. I believe I must have lain there for an hour, and, as I remember, I was just dozing into sleep when I was roused by a draught of cold air and by distinctly feeling the spray of the sea blown upon my face. I started to my feet, and not having allowed in the dark for the motion of the ship, I was instantly thrown violently across the state-room upon the couch which was placed

beneath the port-hole. I recovered myself immediately, however, and climbed upon my knees. The port-hole was again wide open and fastened back!

Now, these things are facts. I was wide awake when I got up, and I should certainly have been waked by the fall had I still been dozing. Moreover, I bruised my elbows and knees badly, and the bruises were there on the following morning to testify to the fact, if I myself had doubted it. The port-hole was wide open and fastened back—a thing so unaccountable that I remember very well feeling astonishment rather than fear when I discovered it. I at once closed the plate again and screwed down the loop nut with all my strength. It was very dark in the state-room. I reflected that the port had certainly been opened within an hour after Robert had at first shut it in my presence, and I determined to watch it and see whether it would open again. Those brass fittings are very heavy and by no means easy to move; I could not believe that the clamp had been turned by the shaking of the screw. I stood peering out through the thick glass at the alternate white and gray streaks of the sea that foamed beneath the ship's side. I must have remained there a quarter of an hour.

Suddenly, as I stood, I distinctly heard something moving behind me in one of the berths, and a moment afterward, just as I turned instinctively to look—though I could of course see nothing in the darkness—I heard a very faint groan. I sprang across the state-room, and

tore the curtains of the upper berth aside, thrusting in my hands to discover if there were any one there. There was some one.

I remember that the sensation as I put my hands forward was as though I were plunging them into the air of a damp cellar, and from behind the curtains came a gust of wind that smelled horribly of stagnant sea-water. I laid hold of something that had the shape of a man's arm, but was smooth, and wet, and icy cold. But suddenly, as I pulled, the creature sprang violently forward against me, a clammy, oozy mass, as it seemed to me, heavy and wet, yet endowed with a sort of supernatural strength. I reeled across the state-room, and in an instant the door opened and the thing rushed out. I had not had time to be frightened, and, quickly recovering myself, I sprang through the door and gave chase at the top of my speed; but I was too late. Ten yards before me I could see—I am sure I saw it—a dark shadow moving in the dimly lighted passage, quickly as the shadow of a fast horse thrown before a dog-cart by the lamp on a dark night. But in a moment it had disappeared, and I found myself holding on to the polished rail that ran along the bulkhead where the passage turned toward the companion. My hair stood on end, and the cold perspiration rolled down my face. I am not ashamed of it in the least: I was very badly frightened.

Still I doubted my senses, and pulled myself togeth-

er. It was absurd, I thought. The Welsh rare-bit I had eaten had disagreed with me. I had been in a nightmare. I made my way back to my state-room, and entered it with an effort. The whole place smelled of stagnant sea-water, as it had when I had waked on the previous evening. It required my utmost strength to go in and grope among my things for a box of wax lights. As I lighted a railway reading-lantern which I always carry in case I want to read after the lamps are out, I perceived that the port-hole was again open, and a sort of creeping horror began to take possession of me which I never felt before, nor wish to feel again. But I got a light and proceeded to examine the upper berth, expecting to find it drenched with sea-water.

But I was disappointed. The bed had been slept in, and the smell of the sea was strong; but the bedding was as dry as a bone. I fancied that Robert had not had the courage to make the bed after the accident of the previous night—it had all been a hideous dream. I drew the curtains back as far as I could, and examined the place very carefully. It was perfectly dry. But the port-hole was open again. With a sort of dull bewilderment of horror I closed it and screwed it down, and, thrusting my heavy stick through the brass loop, wrenched it with all my might, till the thick metal began to bend under the pressure. Then I hooked my reading-lantern into the red velvet at the head of the couch, and sat down to recover my senses

if I could. I sat there all night, unable to think of rest—hardly able to think at all. But the port-hole remained closed, and I did not believe it would now open again without the application of a considerable force.

The morning dawned at last, and I dressed myself slowly, thinking over all that had happened in the night. It was a beautiful day, and I went on deck, glad to get out into the early, pure sunshine, and to smell the breeze from the blue water, so different from the noisome, stagnant odor of my state-room. Instinctively I turned aft, toward the surgeon's cabin. There he stood, with a pipe in his mouth, taking his morning airing precisely as on the preceding day.

"Good-morning," said he, quietly, but looking at me with evident curiosity.

"Doctor, you were quite right," said I. "There is something wrong about that place."

"I thought you would change your mind," he answered rather triumphantly. "You have had a bad night, eh? Shall I make you a pick-me-up? I have a capital recipe."

"No, thanks," I cried. "But I would like to tell you what happened."

I then tried to explain, as clearly as possible, precisely what had occurred, not omitting to state that I had been scared as I had never been scared in my whole life before. I dwelt particularly on the phenomenon of the

port-hole, which was a fact to which I could testify, even if the rest had been an illusion. I had closed it twice in the night, and the second time I had actually bent the brass in wrenching it with my stick. I believe I insisted a good deal on this point.

"You seem to think I am likely to doubt the story," said the doctor, smiling at the detailed account of the state of the port-hole. "I do not doubt it in the least. I renew my invitation to you. Bring your traps here, and take half my cabin."

"Come and take half of mine for one night," I said. "Help me to get at the bottom of this thing."

"You will get to the bottom of something else if you try," answered the doctor.

"What?" I asked.

"The bottom of the sea. I am going to leave this ship. It is not canny."

"Then you will not help me to find out—"

"Not I," said the doctor, quickly. "It is my business to keep my wits about me—not to go fiddling about with ghosts and things."

"Do you really believe it is a ghost?" I inquired, rather contemptuously. But as I spoke I remembered very well the horrible sensation of the supernatural which had got possession of me during the night. The doctor turned sharply on me.

"Have you any reasonable explanation of these things to offer?" he asked. "No; you have not. Well,

you say you will find an explanation. I say that you won't, sir, simply because there is not any."

"But, my dear sir," I retorted, "do you, a man of science, mean to tell me that such things can not be explained?"

"I do," he answered, stoutly. "And if they could, I would not be concerned in the explanation."

I did not care to spend another night alone in the state-room, and yet I was obstinately determined to get at the root of the disturbances. I do not believe there are many men who would have slept there alone, after passing two such nights. But I made up my mind to try it if I could not get any one to share a watch with me. The doctor was evidently not inclined for such an experiment. He said he was a surgeon, and that in case any accident occurred on board he must be always in readiness. He could not afford to have his nerves unsettled. Perhaps he was quite right, but I am inclined to think that his precaution was prompted by his inclination. On inquiry, he informed me that there was no one on board who would be likely to join me in my investigations, and after a little more conversation I left him. A little later I met the captain, and told him my story. I said that if no one would spend the night with me I would ask leave to have the light left burning all night, and would try it alone.

"Look here," said he, "I will tell you what I will do. I will share your watch myself, and we will see what hap-

pens. It is my belief that we can find out between us. There may be some fellow skulking on board, who steals a passage by frightening the passengers. It is just possible that there may be something queer in the capentering of that berth."

I suggested taking the ship's carpenter below and examining the place; but I was overjoyed at the captain's offer to spend the night with me. He accordingly sent for the workman and ordered him to do anything I required. We went below at once. I had all the bedding cleared out of the upper berth, and we examined the place thoroughly to see if there was a board loose anywhere, or a panel which could be opened or pushed aside. We tried the planks everywhere, tapped the flooring, unscrewed the fittings of the lower berth and took it to pieces—in short, there was not a square inch of the state-room which was not searched and tested. Everything was in perfect order, and we put everything back in its place. As we were finishing our work, Robert came to the door and looked in.

"Well, sir—find anything, sir?" he asked with a ghastly grin.

"You were right about the port-hole, Robert," I said, and I gave him the promised sovereign. The carpenter did his work silently and skillfully, following my directions. When he had done he spoke.

"I'm a plain man, sir," he said. "But it's my belief you had better just turn out your things and

let 'em run half a dozen four-inch screws through the door of this cabin. There's no good never came o' this cabin yet, sir, and that's all about it. There's been four lives lost out o' here to my own remembrance, and that in four trips. Better give it up, sir—better give it up!"

"I will try it for one night more," I said.

"Better give it up, sir—better give it up! It's a precious bad job," repeated the workman, putting his tools in his bag and leaving the cabin.

But my spirits had risen considerably at the prospect of having the captain's company, and I made up my mind not to be prevented from going to the end of the strange business. I abstained from Welsh rare-bits and grog that evening, and did not even join in the customary game of whist. I wanted to be quite sure of my nerves, and my vanity made me anxious to make a good figure in the captain's eyes.

The captain was one of those splendidly tough and cheerful specimens of seafaring humanity whose combined courage, hardihood, and calmness in difficulty leads them naturally into high positions of trust. He was not the man to be led away by an idle tale, and the mere fact that he was willing to join me in the investigation was proof that he thought there was something seriously wrong which could not be accounted for on ordinary theories, nor laughed down as a common superstition. To some extent, too, his reputation was at stake, as well

as the reputation of the ship. It is no light thing to lose passengers overboard, and he knew it.

About ten o'clock that evening, as I was smoking a last cigar, he came up to me and drew me aside from the beat of the other passengers who were patrolling the deck in the warm darkness.

"This is a serious matter, Mr. Brisbane," he said. "We must make up our minds either way—to be disappointed or to have a pretty rough time of it. You see I can not afford to laugh at the affair, and I will ask you to sign your name to a statement of whatever occurs. If nothing happens to-night we will try it again to-morrow and next day. Are you ready?"

So we went below, and entered the state-room. As we went in I could see Robert the steward, who stood a little further down the passage, watching us, with his usual grin, as though certain that something dreadful was about to happen. The captain closed the door behind us and bolted it.

"Supposing we put your portmanteau before the door," he suggested. "One of us can sit on it. Nothing can get out then. Is the port screwed down?"

I found it as I had left it in the morning. Indeed, without using a lever, as I had done, no one could have opened it. I drew back the curtains of the upper berth so that I could see well into it. By the captain's advice I lighted my reading-lantern and placed it so that it shone upon the white sheets above. He insisted upon

sitting on the portmanteau, declaring that he wished to be able to swear that he had sat before the door. Then he requested me to search the state-room thoroughly, an operation very soon accomplished, as it consisted merely in looking beneath the lower berth and under the couch below the port-hole. The spaces were quite empty.

"It is impossible for any human being to get in," I said, "or for any human being to open the port."

"Very good," said the captain, calmly. "If we see anything now, it must be either imagination or something supernatural."

I sat down on the edge of the lower berth.

"The first time it happened," said the captain, crossing his legs and leaning back against the door, "was in March. The passenger, who slept here in the upper berth, turned out to have been a lunatic—at all events, he was known to have been a little touched, and he had taken his passage without the knowledge of his friends. He rushed out in the middle of the night, and threw himself overboard, before the officer who had the watch could stop him. We stopped and lowered a boat; it was a quiet night, just before that heavy weather came on; but we could not find him. Of course his suicide was afterward accounted for on the ground of his insanity."

"I suppose that often happens?" I remarked, rather absently.

"Not often—no," said the captain; "never before in my experience, though I have heard of it happening

on board of other ships. Well, as I was saying, that occurred in March. On the very next trip— What are you looking at?" he asked, stopping suddenly in his narration.

I believe I gave no answer. My eyes were riveted upon the port-hole. It seemed to me that the brass loop nut was beginning to turn very slowly upon the screw—so slowly, however, that I was not sure it moved at all. I watched it intently, fixing its position in my mind, and trying to ascertain whether it changed. Seeing where I was looking, the captain looked too.

"It moves!" he exclaimed, in a tone of conviction. "No, it does not," he added, after a minute.

"If it were the jarring of the screw," said I, "it would have opened during the day; but I found it this evening jambed tight as I left it this morning."

I rose and tried the nut. It was certainly loosened, for by an effort I could move it with my hands.

"The queer thing," said the captain, "is that the second man who was lost is supposed to have got through that very port. We had a terrible time over it. It was in the middle of the night, and the weather was very heavy; there was an alarm that one of the ports was open and the sea running in. I came below and found everything flooded, the water pouring in every time she rolled, and the whole port swinging from the top bolts—not the port-hole in the middle. Well, we managed to shut it, but the water did some damage. Ever since that

the place smells of sea-water from time to time. We supposed the passenger had thrown himself out, though the Lord only knows how he did it. The steward kept telling me that he can not keep anything shut here. Upon my word—I can smell it now, can not you?" he inquired, sniffing the air suspiciously.

"Yes—distinctly," I said, and I shuddered as that same odor of stagnant sea-water grew stronger in the cabin. "Now, to smell like this, the place must be damp," I continued, "and yet when I examined it with the carpenter this morning everything was perfectly dry. It is most extraordinary—hallo!"

My reading-lantern, which had been placed in the upper berth, was suddenly extinguished. There was still a good deal of light from the pane of ground glass near the door, behind which loomed the regulation lamp. The ship rolled heavily, and the curtain of the upper berth swung far out into the state-room and back again. I rose quickly from my seat on the edge of the bed, and the captain at the same moment started to his feet with a loud cry of surprise. I had turned with the intention of taking down the lantern to examine it, when I heard his exclamation, and immediately afterward his call for help. I sprang toward him. He was wrestling with all his might, with the brass loop of the port. It seemed to turn against his hands in spite of all his efforts. I caught up my cane, a heavy oak stick I always used to carry, and thrust it through the ring and bore on it with

all my strength. But the strong wood snapped suddenly, and I fell upon the couch. When I rose again the port was wide open, and the captain was standing with his back against the door, pale to the lips.

"There is something in that berth!" he cried, in a strange voice, his eyes almost starting from his head. "Hold the door, while I look—it shall not escape us, whatever it is!"

But instead of taking his place, I sprang upon the lower bed, and seized something which lay in the upper berth.

It was something ghostly, horrible beyond words, and it moved in my grip. It was like the body of a man long drowned, and yet it moved, and had the strength of ten men living; but I gripped it with all my might—the slippery, oozy, horrible thing—the dead white eyes seemed to stare at me out of the dusk; the putrid odor of rank sea-water was about it, and its shiny hair hung in foul wet curls over its dead face. I wrestled with the dead thing; it thrust itself upon me and forced me back and nearly broke my arms; it wound its corpse's arms about my neck—the living death—and overpowered me, so that I, at last, cried aloud and fell, and left my hold.

As I fell the thing sprang across me, and seemed to throw itself upon the captain. When I last saw him on his feet his face was white and his lips set. It seemed to me that he struck a violent blow at the dead being,

and then he, too, fell forward upon his face, with an inarticulate cry of horror.

The thing paused an instant, seeming to hover over his prostrate body, and I could have screamed again for very fright, but I had no voice left. The thing vanished suddenly, and it seemed to my disturbed senses that it made its exit through the open port; though how that was possible, considering the smallness of the aperture, is more than any one can tell. I lay a long time upon the floor, and the captain lay beside me. At last I partially recovered my senses and moved, and instantly I knew that my arm was broken — the small bone of the left forearm near the wrist.

I got upon my feet somehow, and with my remaining hand I tried to raise the captain. He groaned and moved, and at last came to himself. He was not hurt, but he seemed badly stunned.

Well, do you want to hear any more? There is nothing more. That is the end of my story. The carpenter carried out his scheme of running half a dozen four-inch screws through the door of 105; and if ever you take a passage in the *Kamtschatka*, you may ask for a berth in that state-room. You will be told that it is engaged—yes—it is engaged by that dead thing.

I finished the trip in the surgeon's cabin. He doctored my broken arm, and advised me not to "fiddle about with ghosts and things" any more. The captain

was very silent, and never sailed again in that ship, though it is still running. And I will not sail in her either. It was a very disagreeable experience, and I was very badly frightened, which is a thing I do not like. That is all. That is how I saw a ghost—if it was a ghost. It was dead, anyhow.

Nobody spoke for some time after the Novelist finished his story. The wind, which had changed and freshened during his recital, whistled through the rigging overhead, and the vessel rolled heavily from side to side as she bowled along, every other minute bringing the black hurrying waters directly under the feet of the group by the deck-house. At last the silence was broken by *Beatrice*, who exclaimed under her breath, "I shall sleep in the saloon to-night! I never heard anything so creepy in my life." "There is something decidedly original in the idea of smelling a ghost," said the Critic, "but for a ghost to be big and solid enough to break Brisbane's arm, and yet small enough to get through a port-hole, savors of the improbable. Now, if his atmosphere had been poisonous and Brisbane had been found suffocated, or if he had only had a little more of the Ram Lal style of going to work about him—" "Pshaw!" exclaimed the Romancer, "that story is true, every word of it. Nobody can make me believe I should sit here and shiver at a concoction. Every story that makes your flesh creep is a true story—without that postulate there could be no romance. Therefore, ghosts exist, as everybody knows." "How do *you* know?" inquired the Tragedian blandly, seeing his opportunity. "Have you ever seen one?" "That is a question," remarked the Romancer, "which no man has a right to put to another. It's as bad, and in the same way, as asking a man whether certain things move him to sins of the imagination. If I

have seen ghosts, it is because I have deserved to see ghosts, and, if I have deserved to see ghosts, why, even the law, the unfairest thing on earth, would not ask me to criminate myself by saying so. But I have no objection to tell you about a ghost that somebody saw, if you care to hear." The company cared very much indeed, as the Romancer learned instantly; so, with the practiced ease of a man who is master of his subject, his style, and himself, he plunged at once into the middle of his story.

MARKHEIM.

By ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

"Yes," said the dealer, "our windfalls are of various kinds. Some customers are ignorant, and then I touch a dividend on my superior knowledge. Some are dishonest," and here he held up the candle, so that the light fell strongly on his visitor, "and in that case," he continued, "I profit by my virtue."

Markheim had but just entered from the daylight streets, and his eyes had not yet grown familiar with the mingled shine and darkness in the shop. At these pointed words, and before the near presence of the flame, he blinked painfully and looked aside.

The dealer chuckled. "You come to me on Christmas-day," he resumed, "when you know that I am alone in my house, put up my shutters, and make a point of refusing business. Well, you will have to pay for that; you will have to pay for my derangement, when I should be balancing my books; you will have to pay, besides, for a kind of manner that I remark in you to-day very strongly. I am the essence of discretion, and ask no awkward questions; but when a customer

can not look me in the eye, he has to pay for it." The dealer once more chuckled; and then, changing to his usual business voice, though still with a note of irony, "You can give, as usual, a clear account of how you came into the possession of the object?" he continued. "Still your uncle's cabinet? A remarkable collector, sir!"

And the little pale, round-shouldered dealer stood almost on tip-toe, looking over the top of his gold spectacles, and nodding his head with every mark of disbelief. Markheim returned his gaze with one of infinite pity, and a touch of horror.

"This time," said he, "you are in error. I have not come to sell, but to buy. I have no curios to dispose of; my uncle's cabinet is bare to the wainscot; even were it still intact, I have done well on the Stock Exchange, and should more likely add to it than otherwise, and my errand to-day is simplicity itself. I seek a Christmas present for a lady," he continued, waxing more fluent as he struck into the speech he had prepared; "and certainly I owe you every excuse for thus disturbing you upon so small a matter. But the thing was neglected yesterday; I must produce my little compliment at dinner; and, as you very well know, a rich marriage is not a thing to be neglected."

Then followed a pause, during which the dealer seemed to weigh this statement incredulously. The ticking of many clocks among the curious lumber of the

shop, and the faint rushing of the cabs in a near thoroughfare, filled up the interval of silence.

"Well, sir," said the dealer, "be it so. You are an old customer after all; and if, as you say, you have the chance of a good marriage, far be it from me to be an obstacle. Here is a nice thing for a lady, now," he went on, "this hand-glass—fifteenth century, warranted—comes from a good collection, too; but I reserve the name, in the interests of my customer, who was just like yourself, my dear sir, the nephew and sole heir of a remarkable collector."

The dealer, while he thus ran on in his dry and biting voice, had stooped to take the object from its place; and, as he had done so, a shock had passed through Markheim, a start both of hand and foot, a sudden leap of many tumultuous passions to the face. It passed as swiftly as it came, and left no trace beyond a certain trembling of the hand that now received the glass.

"A glass," he said, hoarsely, and then paused, and repeated it more clearly. "A glass! For Christmas! Surely not!"

"And why not?" cried the dealer. "Why not a glass?"

Markheim was looking upon him with an indefinable expression. "You ask me why not?" he said. "Why, look here—look in it—look at yourself! Do you like to see it? No! nor I—nor any man."

The little man had jumped back when Markheim

had so suddenly confronted him with the mirror; but now, perceiving there was nothing worse on hand, he chuckled. "Your future lady, sir, must be pretty hard favored," said he.

"No," said Markheim, with great conviction. "But about you. I ask you for a Christmas present, and you give me this—this damned reminder of years, and sins, and follies—this hand-conscience! Did you mean it? Had you a thought in your mind? Tell me. It will be better for you if you do. Come, tell me about yourself. I hazard a guess now, that you are in secret a very charitable man."

The dealer looked closely at his companion. It was very odd, Markheim did not appear to be laughing; there was something in his face like an eager sparkle of hope, but nothing of mirth.

"What are you driving at?" the dealer asked.

"Not charitable?" returned the other, gloomily. "Not charitable; not pious; not scrupulous; unloving, unbeloved; a hand to get money, a safe to keep it. Is that all? Dear God, man, is that all?"

"I will tell you what it is," began the dealer, with some sharpness, and then broke off again into a chuckle. "But I see this is a love match of yours, and you have been drinking the lady's health."

"Ah!" cried Markheim, with a strange curiosity. "Ah, have you been in love? Tell me about that."

"I," cried the dealer—"I in love! I never had the

time, nor have I the time to-day for all this nonsense. Will you take the glass?"

"Where is the hurry?" returned Markheim. "It is very pleasant to stand here talking; and life is so short and insecure that I would not hurry away from any pleasure—no, not even from so mild a one as this. We should rather cling, cling to what little we can get, like a man at a cliff's edge. Every second is a cliff, if you think upon it—a cliff a mile high—high enough, if we fall, to dash us out of every feature of humanity. Hence it is best to talk pleasantly. Let us talk of each other: why should we wear this mask. Let us be confidential. Who knows, we might become friends?"

"I have just one word to say to you," said the dealer. "Either make your purchase, or walk out of my shop!"

"True, true," said Markheim. "Enough fooling. To business. Show me something else."

The dealer stooped once more, this time to replace the glass upon the shelf, his thin blond hair falling over his eyes as he did so. Markheim moved a little nearer, with one hand in the pocket of his great-coat; he drew himself up and filled his lungs; at the same time many different emotions were depicted together on his face—terror, horror, and resolve, fascination and a physical repulsion; and through a haggard lift of his upper lip his teeth looked out.

"This, perhaps, may suit," observed the dealer; and then, as he began to re-arise, Markheim bounded from

behind upon his victim. The long, skewer-like dagger flashed and fell. The dealer struggled like a hen, striking his temple on the shelf, and then tumbled on the floor in a heap.

Time had some score of small voices in that shop, some stately and slow, as was becoming to their great age; others garrulous and hurried. All these told out the seconds in an intricate chorus of tickings. Then the passage of a lad's feet, heavily running on the pavement, broke in upon these smaller voices and startled Markheim into the consciousness of his surroundings. He looked about him awfully. The candle stood on the counter, its flame solemnly wagging in a draught; and, by that inconsiderable movement, the whole room was filled with noiseless bustle, and kept heaving like a sea; the tall shadows nodding, the gross blots of darkness swelling and dwindling as with respiration, the faces of the portraits and the china gods changing and wavering like images in water. The inner door stood ajar, and peered into that leaguer of shadows with a long slit of daylight like a pointing finger.

From these fear-stricken rovings, Markheim's eyes returned to the body of his victim, where it lay both humped and sprawling, incredibly small, and strangely meaner than in life. In these poor, miserly clothes, in that ungainly attitude, the dealer lay like so much sawdust. Markheim had feared to see it, and, lo! it was nothing. And yet, as he gazed, this bundle of old clothes

and pool of blood began to find eloquent voices. There it must lie; there was none to work the cunning hinges or direct the miracle of locomotion—there it must lie till it was found. Found! ay, and then? Then would this dead flesh lift up a cry that would echo over England, and fill the world with the echoes of pursuit. Ay, dead or not, this was still the enemy. "Time, was that when the brains were out," he thought; and the first word struck into his mind. Time, now that the deed was accomplished—time, which had closed for the victim, had become instant and momentous for the slayer.

The thought was yet in his mind, when, first one and then another, with every variety of pace and voice—one deep as the bell from a cathedral turret, another ringing on its treble notes the prelude of a waltz—the clocks began to strike the hour of three in the afternoon.

The sudden outbreak of so many tongues in that dumb chamber staggered him. He began to bestir himself, going to and fro with the candle, beleaguered by moving shadows, and startled to the soul by chance reflections. In many rich mirrors, some of home design, some from Venice or Amsterdam, he saw his face repeated and repeated, as it were an army of spies; his own eyes met and detected him; and the sound of his own steps, lightly as they fell, vexed the surrounding quiet. And still, as he continued to fill his pockets, his mind accused him, with a sickening iteration, of the thousand faults of his design. He should have chosen a more

quiet hour; he should have prepared an alibi; he should not have used a knife; he should have been more cautious, and only bound and gagged the dealer, and not killed him; he should have been more bold, and killed the servant also; he should have done all things otherwise; poignant regrets, weary, incessant toiling of the mind to change what was unchangeable, to plan what was now useless, to be the architect of the irrevocable past. Meanwhile, and behind all this activity, brute terrors, like the scurrying of rats in a deserted attic, filled the more remote chambers of his brain with riot; the hand of the constable would fall heavy on his shoulder, and his nerves would jerk like a hooked fish; or he beheld, in galloping defile, the dock, the prison, the gallows, and the black coffin.

Terror of the people in the street sat down before his mind like a besieging army. It was impossible, he thought, but that some rumor of the struggle must have reached their ears and set on edge their curiosity; and now, in all the neighboring houses, he divined them sitting motionless and with uplifted ear—solitary people, condemned to spend Christmas dwelling alone on memories of the past, and now startlingly recalled from that tender exercise; happy family parties, struck into silence round the table, the mother still with raised finger: every degree and age and humor, but all, by their own hearths, prying and hearkening and weaving the rope that was to hang him. Sometimes it seemed to him he

could not move too softly; the clink of the tall Bohemian goblets rang out loudly like a bell; and, alarmed by the bigness of the ticking, he was tempted to stop the clocks. And then, again, with a swift transition of his terrors, the very silence of the house appeared a source of peril, and a thing to strike and freeze the passer-by; and he would step more boldly, and bustle aloud among the contents of the shop, and imitate, with elaborate bravado, the movements of a busy man at ease in his own house.

But he was now so pulled about by different alarms that, while one portion of his mind was still alert and cunning, another trembled on the brink of lunacy. One hallucination in particular took a strong hold on his credulity. The neighbor hearkening with white face beside his window, the passer-by arrested by a horrible surmise on the pavement—these could at worst suspect, they could not know; through the brick walls and shuttered windows only sounds could penetrate. But here, within the house, was he alone? He knew he was; he had watched the servant set forth sweethearting, in her poor best, "out for the day," written in every ribbon and smile. Yes, he was alone, of course; and yet, in the bulk of empty house above him, he could surely hear a stir of delicate footing—he was surely conscious, inexplicably conscious, of some presence. Ay, surely; to every room and corner of the house his imagination followed it; and now it was a faceless thing, that yet had

eyes to see with; and, again, it was a shadow of himself; and yet, again, behold the image of the dead dealer, reinspired with cunning and hatred.

At times, with a strong effort, he would glance at the open door which still seemed to repel his eyes. The house was tall, the skylight small and dirty, the day blind with fog; and the light that filtered down to the ground story was exceeding faint, and showed dimly on the threshold of the shop. And yet, in that strip of doubtful brightness, did there not hang wavering a shadow?

Suddenly, from the street outside, a very jovial gentleman began to beat with a staff on the shop door, accompanying his blows with shouts and railleries in which the dealer was continually called upon by name. Markheim, smitten into ice, glanced at the dead man. But no! he lay quite still; he was fled away far beyond earshot of these blows and shoutings; he was sunk beneath seas of silence; and his name, which would once have caught his notice above the howling of a storm, had become an empty sound. And presently the jovial gentleman desisted from his knocking and departed.

Here was a broad hint to hurry what remained to be done, to geth forth from this accusing neighborhood, to plunge into a bath of London multitudes, and to reach, on the other side of day, that haven of safety and apparent innocence—his bed. One visitor had come: at any moment another might follow and be more obstinate.

To have done the deed, and yet not to reap the profit, would be too abhorrent a failure. The money, that was now Markheim's concern; and as a means to that, the keys.

He glanced over his shoulder at the open door, where the shadow was still lingering and shivering; and with no conscious repugnance of the mind, yet with a tremor of the belly, he drew near the body of his victim. The human character had quite departed. Like a suit half stuffed with bran, the limbs lay scattered, the trunk doubled, on the floor; and yet the thing repelled him. Although so dingy and inconsiderable to the eye, he feared it might have more significance to the touch. He took the body by the shoulders and turned it on its back. It was strangely light and supple, and the limbs, as if they had been broken, fell into the oddest postures. The face was robbed of all expression; but it was as pale as wax, and shockingly smeared with blood about one temple. That was, for Markheim, the one displeasing circumstance. It carried him back, upon the instant, to a certain fair-day in a fishers' village: a gray day, a piping wind, a crowd upon the street, the blare of brasses, the booming of drums, the nasal voice of a ballad-singer, and a boy going to and fro, buried overhead in the crowd and divided between interest and fear, until, coming out upon the chief place of concourse, he beheld a booth and a great screen with pictures, dismally designed, garishly colored; Brownrigg with her apprentice; the Mannings

with their murdered guest; Weare in the death-grip of Thurtell; and a score besides of famous crimes. The thing was as clear as an illusion; he had shrunk back into that little boy; he was looking once again, and with the same sense of physical revolt at these vile pictures; he was still stunned by the thumping of the drums. A bar of that day's music returned upon his memory; and at that, for the first time, a qualm came over him, a breath of nausea, a sudden weakness of the joints, which he must instantly resist and conquer.

He judged it more prudent to confront than to flee from these considerations; looking the more hardily in the dead face, bending his mind to realize the nature and greatness of his crime. So little a while ago that face had moved with every change of sentiment, that pale mouth had spoken, that body had been all on fire with governable energies; and now, and by his act, that piece of life had been arrested, as the horologist, with interjected finger, arrests the beating of the clock. So he reasoned in vain; he could rise to no remorseful consciousness; the same heart, which had shuddered before the painted effigies of crime, looked on its reality unmoved. At best, he felt a gleam of pity for one who had been endowed in vain with all those faculties that can make the world a garden of enchantment, one who had never lived and who was now dead. But of penitence, no, not a tremor.

With that, shaking himself clear of these considera-

tions, he found the keys and advanced toward the open door of the shop. Outside, it had begun to rain smartly; and the sound of the shower upon the roof had banished silence. Like some dripping cavern, the chambers of the house were haunted by a faint, incessant echoing, which filled the ear, and mingled with the ticking of the clocks. And, as Markheim approached the door, he seemed to hear, in answer to his own cautious tread, the steps of another foot withdrawing up the stair. The shadow still palpitated loosely on the threshold. He threw a ton's weight of resolve upon his muscles, and drew back the door.

The faint, foggy daylight glimmered dimly on the bare floor and stairs; on the bright suit of armor posted, halbert in hand, upon the landing; and on the dark wood-carvings and framed pictures that hung against the yellow panels of the wainscot. So loud was the beating of the rain through all the house that, in Markheim's ears, it began to be distinguished into many different sounds. Footsteps and sighs, the tread of regiments marching in the distance, the chink of money in the counting, and the creaking of doors held stealthily ajar, appeared to mingle with the patter of the drops upon the cupola and the gushing of the water in the pipes. The sense that he was not alone grew upon him to the verge of madness. On every side he was haunted and begirt by presences. He heard them moving stealthily in the upper chambers; from the shop, he heard the

dead man getting to his legs; and, as he began with a great effort to mount the stairs, feet fled quietly before him and followed gradually behind. If he were but deaf, he thought, how tranquilly he would possess his soul! And then again, and hearkening with ever fresh attention, he blessed himself for that unresting sense which held the out-posts and stood a trusted sentinel upon his life. His head turned continually on his neck; his eyes, which seemed starting from their orbits, scouted on every side, and on every side were half rewarded as with the tail of something nameless vanishing. The four-and-twenty steps to the first floor were four-and-twenty agonies.

On that first story, the doors stood ajar, three of them like three ambushes, shaking his nerves like the throats of cannon. He could never again, he felt, be sufficiently immured and fortified from men's observing eyes; the sole joy for which he longed was to be home, girt in by walls, buried among bedclothes, and invisible to all but God. And at that thought, he wondered a little, recollecting tales of other murderers and the fear they were said to entertain of heavenly avengers. It was not so, at least, with him. He feared the laws of nature, lest, in their callous and immutable procedure, they should preserve some damning evidence of his crime. He feared tenfold more, with a slavish, superstitious terror, some scission in the continuity of man's experience, some willful illegality of nature. He played a game of

skill, depending on the rules, calculating consequence from cause; and what if nature, as the defeated tyrant overthrew the chessboard, should break the mold of their succession? The like had befallen Napoleon (so writers said) when the winter changed the time of its appearance. The like might befall Markheim: the solid walls might become transparent, and reveal his doings like those of bees in a glass hive; the stout planks might yield under his foot like quicksands and detain him in their clutch; ay, and there were soberer accidents that might destroy him: if, for instance, the house should fall and imprison him beside the body of his victim; or the house next door should fly on fire, and the firemen invade him from all sides. These things he feared; and, in a sense, these things might be called the hands of God reached forth against sin. But about God himself he was at ease; his act was, doubtless, exceptional, but so were his excuses, which God knew; it was there, and not among men, that he felt sure of justice.

When he had got safe into the drawing-room, and shut the door behind him, he was aware of a respite from alarms. The room was quite dismantled, uncarpeted besides, and strewn with packing cases, and incongruous furniture; several great pier-glasses, in which he beheld himself at various angles, like an actor on a stage; many pictures, framed and unframed, standing with their faces to the wall; a fine Sheraton sideboard, a cabinet of mar-

quetry, and a great old bed, with tapestry hangings. The windows opened to the floor; but, by great, good fortune, the lower part of the shutters had been closed, and this concealed him from the neighbors. Here, then, Markheim drew in a packing-case before the cabinet, and began to search among the keys. It was a long business, for they were many; and it was irksome, besides; for, after all, there might be nothing in the cabinet, and time was on the wing. But the closeness of the occupation sobered him. With the tail of his eye he saw the door; even glanced at it from time to time directly, like a besieged commander pleased to verify the good estate of his defenses. But in truth he was at peace. The rain falling in the street sounded natural and pleasant. Presently, on the other side, the notes of a piano were wakened to the music of a hymn, and the voices of many children took up the air and words. How stately, how comfortable was the melody! How fresh the youthful voices! Markheim gave ear to it smilingly, as he sorted out the keys; and his mind was thronged with answerable ideas and images; church-going children and the pealing of the high organ; children afield, bathers by the brookside, ramblers on the brambly common, kite-flyers in the windy and cloud-navigated sky; and then, at another cadence of the hymn, back again to church, and the somnolence of summer Sundays, and the high genteel voice of the parson (which he smiled a little to recall), and the painted

Jacobean tombs, and the dim lettering of the ten commandments in the chancel.

And as he sat thus, at once busy and absent, he was startled to his feet. A flash of ice, a flash of fire, a bursting gush of blood, went over him, and then he stood transfixed and thrilling. A step mounted the stair slowly and steadily, and presently a hand was laid upon the knob, and the lock clicked, and the door opened.

Fear held Markheim in a vise. What to expect he knew not, whether the dead man walking, or the official ministers of human justice, or some chance witness blindly stumbling in to consign him to the gallows. But when a face was thrust into the aperture, glanced round the room, looked at him, nodded and smiled as if in friendly recognition, and then withdrew again, and the door closed behind it, his fear broke loose from his control in a hoarse cry. At the sound of this the visitant returned.

"Did you call me?" he asked pleasantly, and with that he entered the room, and closed the door behind him.

But Markheim stood and gazed at him with all his eyes. Perhaps there was a film upon his sight, but the outlines of the new-comer seemed to change and waver like those of the idols in the wavering candlelight of the shop; and at times he thought he knew him; and at times he thought he bore a likeness to himself; and always, like a lump of living terror, there lay in his bosom

the conviction that this thing was not of the earth and not of God.

And yet the creature had a strange air of the commonplace, as he stepped in and stood looking on Markheim with a smile; and when he added: "You are looking for the money, I believe?" it was in the tones of everyday politeness.

Markheim made no answer.

"I should warn you," resumed the other, "that the maid has left her sweetheart earlier than usual and will soon be here. If Mr. Markheim be found in this house, I need not describe to him the consequences."

"You know me?" cried the murderer.

The visitor smiled. "You have long been a favorite of mine," he said; "and I have long observed and often sought to help you."

"What are you?" cried Markheim; "the devil?"

"What I may be," returned the other, "can not affect the service I propose to render you."

"It can," cried Markheim; "it does! Be helped by you? No, never; not by you! You do not know me yet; thank God, you do not know me!"

"I know you," replied the visitant, with a sort of kind severity, or rather, firmness; "I know you to the soul."

"Know me!" cried Markheim; "who can do so? My life is but a travesty and slander on myself. I have lived to belie my nature. All men do; all men are bet-

ter than this disguise that grows about and stifles them. You see each dragged away by life, like one whom bravos have seized and muffled in a cloak. If they had their own control—if you could see their faces, they would be altogether different, they would shine out for heroes and saints! I am worse than most; myself is more overlaid; my excuse is known to me and God. But had I the time, I could disclose myself."

"To me?" inquired the visitant.

"To you before all," returned the murderer. "I supposed you were intelligent. I thought—since you exist—you would prove a reader of the heart. And yet you would propose to judge me by my acts. Think of it; my acts! I was born and I have lived in a land of giants; giants have dragged me by the wrists since I was born out of my mother—the giants of circumstance. And you would judge me by my acts! But can you not look within? Can you not understand that evil is hateful to me? Can you not see within me the clear writing of conscience, never blurred by any willful sophistry, although too often disregarded? Can you not read me for a thing that surely must be common as humanity—the unwilling sinner?"

"All this is very feelingly expressed," was the reply, "but it regards me not. These points of consistency are beyond my province, and I care not in the least by what compulsion you may have been dragged away, so as you are but carried in the right direction. But time flies;

the servant delays, looking in the faces of the crowd and at the pictures on the hoardings, but still she keeps moving nearer; and remember, it is as if the gallows itself was striding toward you through the Christmas streets! Shall I help you; I, who know all? Shall I tell you where to find the money?"

"For what price?" asked Markheim.

"I offer you the service for a Christmas gift," returned the other.

Markheim could not refrain from smiling with a kind of bitter triumph. "No," said he, "I will take nothing at your hands: if I were dying of thirst, and it was your hand that put the pitcher to my lips, I should find the courage to refuse it. It may be credulous, but I will do nothing to commit myself to evil."

"I have no objection to a death-bed repentance," observed the visitant.

"Because you disbelieve their efficacy!" Markheim cried.

"I do not say so," returned the other; "but I look on these things from a different side, and when the life is done my interest falls. The man has lived to serve me, to spread black looks under color of religion, or to sow tares in the wheat-field, as you do, in a course of weak compliance with desire. Now that he draws so near to his deliverance, he can add but one act of service —to repent, to die smiling, and thus to build up in confidence and hope the more timorous of my surviving fol-

lowers. I am not so hard a master. Try me. Accept my help. Please yourself in life as you have done hitherto; please yourself more amply, spread your elbows at the board; and when the night begins to fall and the curtains to be drawn, I tell you, for your greater comfort, that you will find it even easy to compound your quarrel with your conscience, and to make a truckling peace with God. I came but now from such a death-bed, and the room was full of sincere mourners, listening to the man's last words; and when I looked into that face, which had been set as a flint against mercy, I found it smiling with hope."

"And do you, then, suppose me such a creature?" asked Markheim. "Do you think I have no more generous aspirations than to sin, and sin, and sin, and, at the last, sneak into heaven? My heart rises at the thought. Is this, then, your experience of mankind? or is it because you find me with red hands that you presume such baseness? And is this crime of murder indeed so impious as to dry up the very springs of good?"

"Murder is to me no special category," replied the other. "All sins are murder, even as all life is war. I behold your race, like starving mariners on a raft, plucking crusts out of the hands of famine and feeding on each other's lives. I follow sins beyond the moment of their acting; I find in all that the last consequence is death; and, to my eyes, the pretty maid who thwarts her mother with such taking graces on a question of a

ball, drips no less visibly with human gore than such a murderer as yourself. Do I say that I follow sins? I follow virtues also; they differ not by the thickness of a nail, they are both scythes for the reaping-angel of death. Evil, for which I live, consists not in action but in character. The bad man is dear to me; not the bad act, whose fruits, if we could follow them far enough down the hurtling cataract of the ages, might yet be found more blessed than those of the rarest virtues. And it is not because you have killed a dealer, but because your name is Markheim, that I offer to forward your escape."

"I will lay my heart open to you," answered Markheim. "This crime on which you find me is my last. On my way to it I have learned many lessons; itself is a lesson, a momentous lesson. Hitherto I have been driven with revolt to what I would not; I was a bond-slave to poverty, driven and scourged. There are robust virtues that can stand in these temptations; mine was not so, I had a thirst of pleasure. But to-day, and out of this deed, I pluck both warning and riches—both the power and a fresh resolve to be myself. I become in all things a free actor in the world; I begin to see myself all changed, these hands the agents of good, this heart at peace. Something comes over me out of the past; something of what I have dreamed on Sabbath evenings to the sound of the church-organ, of what I forecast when I shed tears over noble books,

or talked, an innocent child, with my mother. There lies my life; I have wandered a few years, but now I see once more my city of destination."

"You are to use this money on the Stock Exchange, I think?" remarked the visitor; "and there, if I mistake not, you have already lost some thousands?"

"Ah," said Markheim, "but this time I have a sure thing."

"This time, again, you will lose," replied the visitor, quietly.

"Ah, but I keep back the half!" cried Markheim.

"That also you will lose," said the other.

The sweat started upon Markheim's brow. "Well, then, what matter?" he exclaimed. "Say it be lost, say I am plunged again in poverty: shall one part of me, and that the worst, continue until the end to override the better? Evil and good run strong in me, haling me both ways. I do not love the one thing: I love all. I can conceive great deeds, renunciations, martyrdoms, and though I be fallen to such a crime as murder, pity is no stranger to my thoughts. I pity the poor; who knows their trials better than myself? I pity and help them; I prize love, I love honest laughter; there is no good thing nor true thing on earth but I love it from my heart. And are my vices only to direct my life, and my virtues to lie without effect, like some passive lumber of the mind? Not so; good, also, is a spring of acts."

But the visitant raised his finger. "For six-and-thirty years that you have been in this world," said he, "through many changes of fortune and varieties of humor, I have watched you steadily fall. Fifteen years ago you would have started at a theft. Three years back you would have blenched at the name of murder. Is there any crime, is there any cruelty or meanness, from which you still recoil? Five years from now I shall detect you in the fact. Downward, downward, lies your way; nor can anything but death avail to stop you."

"It is true," he said, huskily; "I have in some degree complied with evil. But it is so with all: the very saints, in the mere exercise of living, grow less dainty, and take on the tone of their surroundings."

"I will propound to you one simple question," said the other; "and as you answer, I shall read to you your moral horoscope. You have grown in many things more lax; possibly you do right to be so; and, at any account, it is the same with all men. But granting that, are you in any one particular, however trifling, more difficult to please with your own conduct, or do you go in all things with a loose rein?"

"In any one?" repeated Markheim, with an anguish of consideration. "No," he added, with despair, "in none! I have gone down in all."

"Then," said the visitor, "content yourself with what you are, for you will never change; and the words

of your part on this stage are irrevocably written down."

Markheim stood for a long while silent, and indeed it was the visitor who first broke the silence. "That being so," he said, "shall I show you the money?"

"And grace?" cried Markheim.

"Have you not tried it?" returned the other. "Two or three years ago, did I not see you on the platform of revival meetings, and was not your voice the loudest in the hymn?"

"It is true," said Markheim; "and I see clearly what remains for me by way of duty. I thank you for these lessons from my soul; my eyes are opened, and I behold myself at last for what I am."

At this moment, the sharp note of the door-bell rang through the house; and that visitant, as though this were some concerted signal for which he had been waiting, sprang instantly upon his feet.

"The maid!" he cried. "She has returned, as I forewarned you, and there is now before you one more difficult passage. Her master, you must say, is ill; you must let her in, with an assured but rather serious countenance—no smiles, no overacting, and I promise you success! Once the girl within, and the door closed, the same dexterity that has already rid you of the dealer will relieve you of this last danger in your path. Thenceforward you have the whole evening—the whole night, if needful—to ransack the treasures of the house and to

make good your safety. This is help that comes to you with the mask of danger. Up!" he cried; "up, friend; your life hangs trembling in the scales: up, and act!"

Markheim steadily regarded his counselor. "If I be condemned to evil acts," he said, "there is still one door of freedom open—I can cease from action. If my life be an ill thing, I can lay it down. Though I be, as you say truly, at the beck of every small temptation, I can yet, by one decisive gesture, place myself beyond the reach of all. My love of good is damned to barrenness; it may, and let it be! But I have still my hatred of evil; and from that, to your galling disappointment, you shall see that I can draw both energy and courage."

The features of the visitor began to undergo a wonderful and lovely change: they brightened and softened with a tender triumph, and even as they brightened, faded and dislimned. But Markheim did not pause to watch or understand the transformation. He opened the door and went down-stairs very slowly, thinking to himself. His past went soberly before him; he beheld it as it was, ugly and strenuous like a dream, random as chance-medley—a scene of defeat. Life, as he thus reviewed it, tempted him no longer; but on the further side he perceived a quiet haven for his bark.

He paused in the passage, and looked into the shop, where the candle still burned by the dead body. It was strangely silent. Thoughts of the dealer swarmed into

his mind, as he stood gazing. And then the bell once more broke out into an impatient clamor.

He confronted the maid upon the threshold with something like a smile.

"You had better go for the police," said he; "I have killed your master."

There was another long pause at the end of the Romancer's story, and no one seemed inclined to carry the debate between Mr. Markheim and his strange visitant beyond the point where the narrator had left it. The Critic, indeed, meditatively slid in an epigram, and whispered to the Editor, "Poe with a moral sense superadded, by Jove!" but that gentleman only frowned abstractedly. "It's gruesome," growled the Tragedian; "that jovial fellow battering at the gate; why, it reminds one of the knocking in 'Macbeth,' and answers much the same purpose"; and he seemed to be making mental notes, "with a view," as Mr. Gladstone would say, "to future operations." Indeed, the story held the company with a strong fascination, and each member of it could not but feel glad that he could keep his face as well as his thoughts from his neighbor's curious gaze, as in the fast gathering darkness he pondered on the strange problems it suggested. The train of half melancholy, half morbid speculation might have gone on for some time, had it not been broken by the low "Good-night" of *Beatrice*, as she glided, a dim mass of drapery, from the circle. There was no thought of further association after the star of that small society had withdrawn, and with one accord the party broke up. As the Critic descended, an hour later, to the lower deck, he thought he caught a glimpse of the Eminent Tragedian making a wild pass in the air, which at once recalled the terrible deed in the dealer's shop. A warning cough, however, put a stop to these demon-

strations, and when the Critic approached his companion the great man's face wore its usual impassive expression. Perhaps, after all, the flickering shadows had deceived him.

The morning rose bright and clear, but it brought no relief to the belated passengers of the *Bavaria*. The long roll of the uncrested waves, as they moved slowly under and past the vessel, as if bent on some unknown and distant goal, seemed to remind them of their helpless condition, and the sight chafed the more active spirits into discontent. The Captain was not approachable, and replied with unintelligible grunts to obsequious remarks about the weather. The Critic said several words which, as *Beatrice* shook her finger at him reprovingly, were presumably in the Norwegian tongue. The Editor read his Flaubert with something of a protest in his air. Those who kept diaries filled them up to date, and those who did not, pretended they had already done so. The Eminent Tragedian paced the deck, and smoked cigar after cigar in moody silence, the Critic occasionally following him with rather fearful glances. Only the lady was charming as ever, and set her small court skimming over the decks and tumbling down the companion ladder on her behests, crowning all her audacities by dispatching the Critic—a somewhat shy man—in search of the dreadful Captain, with an imperative message to "Come here at once, and tell us when we are going to get out of this." He came, and grimness was gentleness itself in that presence. By dint of these small expedients time passed on and brought the dinner-hour with it, and as dinners on the *Bavaria* are as good as everything else on that model establishment, the company grew fairly cheerful again. After all, they were in excellent case. They might all be in search of a new Atlantis—an earthly paradise with no (printer's) devil to mar its bliss, a place where first nights were not, and chicken and champagne had never been heard of—so magnificently independent were they of old ties of business and pleasure. They had nothing

to do but gently to climb up the climbing wave, and gently (with some slight qualms, it is true) to climb down again. And so they were merry, and the clever men said good things quite as if they had just thought of them, and the ladies laughed—oh, what a silvery laugh had *Beatrice!*—and the soup was spilled into the awkward one's lap, and the wine went round. The meal over, the little knot, which had already found so much pleasure in one another's company, came together again, like bunches of drifting seaweed, and then again there was the pleasant interchange of jest and quip—men's wits have a keener edge on them after dinner—and at length the call for a story. This time the demand was made on a youngish man, who, though a twinkling eye showed the humorist, had sat quiet and absorbed through the fun. "'Tis not a merry tale that is running in my head," said he. "'I am never merry when I hear sweet music,'" quoth *Beatrice*, with a little bow. "Madam," he replied, "the music that is in my ears is that of a young voice now still in death"; and without further ado he began:

MARJORY.

By F. ANSTEY.

It is not without an effort that I have resolved to break, in the course of this narrative, the reserve maintained for nearly twenty years. But the chief reason for silence is removed, now that those are gone who might have been pained or harmed by what I have to tell, and, though I shrink still from reviving certain memories that are fraught with pain, there are others associated therewith in which I shall surely find consolation and relief.

I must have been about eleven at the time I am writing of, and the change which—for good or ill—comes over most boys' lives had not yet threatened mine. I had not left home for school, nor did it seem at all probable then that I should ever do so.

When I read (I was a great reader) of Dotheboys Hall and Salem House—a combination of which establishments formed my notion of school-life—it was with no more personal interest than a cripple might feel in perusing the notice of an impending conscription, for from the battles of school-life I was fortunately exempted.

I was the only son of a widow, and we led a secluded life in a London suburb. My mother took charge of my education herself, and, as far as mere acquirements went, I was certainly not behind other boys of my age. I owe too much to that loving and careful training, Heaven knows, to think of casting any reflection upon it here, but my surroundings were such as almost necessarily to exclude all bracing and hardening influences.

My mother had few friends; we were content with our own companionship, and of boys I knew and cared to know nothing; in fact, I regarded a strange boy with much the same unreasoning aversion as many excellent women feel for the ordinary cow.

I was happy to think that I should never be called upon to associate with them; by and by, when I outgrew my mother's teaching, I was to have a tutor, perhaps even go to college in time, and when I became a man I was to be a curate and live with my mother in a clematis-covered cottage in some pleasant village.

She would often dwell on this future with a tender prospective pride: she spoke of it on the very day that saw it shattered forever.

For there came a morning when, on going to her with my lessons for the day, I was gladdened with an unexpected holiday. I little knew then—though I was to learn so soon—that my lessons had been all holidays, or that on that day they were to end forever.

My mother had had one or two previous attacks of an

illness which seemed to prostrate her for a short period, and as she soon regained her ordinary health, I did not think they could be of a serious nature.

So I devoted my holiday cheerfully enough to the illumination of a text, on the gaudy coloring of which I found myself gazing two days later with a dull wonder, as at the work of a strange hand in a long dead past, for the boy who had painted that was a happy boy who had a mother, and for two endless days I had been alone.

Those days, and many that followed, come back to me now but vaguely. I passed them mostly in a state of blank bewilderment caused by the double sense of sameness and strangeness in everything around me; then there were times when this gave way to a passionate anguish which refused all attempts at comfort, and times even—but very, very seldom — when I almost forgot what had happened to me.

Our one servant remained in the house with me, and a friend and neighbor of my mother's was constant in her endeavors to relieve my loneliness, but I was impatient of them, I fear, and chiefly anxious to be left alone to indulge my melancholy unchecked.

I remember how, as autumn began, and leaf after leaf fluttered down from the trees in our little garden, I watched them fall with a heavier heart, for my mother had known them, and now they, too, were deserting me.

This morbid state of mind had lasted quite long enough when my uncle, who was my guardian, saw fit to

put a summary end to it by sending me to school forthwith; he would have softened the change for me by taking me to his own home first, but there was illness of some sort there, and this was out of the question.

I was neither sorry nor glad when I heard of it, for all places were the same to me just then; only, as the time drew near, I began to regard the future with a growing dread.

The school was at some distance from London, and my uncle took me down by rail; but the only fact I remember connected with the journey is that there was a boy in the carriage with us who cracked walnuts all the way, and I wondered if he was going to school, too, and concluded that he was not, or he would hardly eat quite so many walnuts.

Later we were passing through some wrought-iron gates, and down an avenue of young chestnuts, under a joyous canopy of scarlet, amber, and orange, up to a fine old red-brick house, with a high-pitched, brown roof, and a cupola in which a big bell hung, tinted a warm gold by the afternoon sun.

This was my school, and it did not look so very terrible after all. There was a big bow-window by the pillared portico, and, glancing timidly in, I saw a girl of about my own age sitting there, absorbed in the book she was reading, her long brown hair drooping over her cheek and the hand on which it rested.

She glanced up at the sound of the door-bell, and I

felt her eyes examining me seriously and critically, and then I forgot everything but the fact that I was being introduced to my future schoolmaster, the Rev. Basil Dering.

This was less of an ordeal than I had expected; he had a strong, massively-cut, leonine face, free and abundant white hair, streaked with dark gray, but there was a kind light in his eyes as I looked up at them, and the firm mouth could smile, I found, pleasantly enough.

Mrs. Dering seemed younger, and, though handsome, had a certain stateliness and decision of manner which put me less at my ease, and I was relieved to be told I might say good-by to my uncle, and wander about the grounds as I liked.

I was not surprised to pass through an empty school-room, and to descend by some steep stairs to a deserted playground, for we had been already told that the Michaelmas holidays were not over, and that the boys would not return for some days to come.

It gave me a kind of satisfaction to think of my resemblance, just then, to my favorite, David Copperfield; but I was to have a far pleasanter companion than poor, lugubrious, flute-tootling Mr. Mell, for as I paced the damp paths paved with a mosaic of russet and yellow leaves, I heard light footsteps behind me, and turned to find myself face to face with the girl I had seen at the window.

She stood there breathless for an instant, for she had hurried to overtake me, and against a background of crimson creepers I saw the brilliant face, with its soft but fearless brown eyes, small, straight nose, spirited mouth, and crisp, wavy, golden-brown hair, which I see now as distinctly while I write.

"You're the new boy," she said at length. "I've come out to make you feel more at home. I suppose you don't feel *quite* at home just yet?"

"Not quite, thank you," I said, lifting my cap with ceremony, for I had been taught to be particular about my manners; "I have never been to school before, you see, Miss Dering."

I think she was a little puzzled by so much politeness. "I know," she said, softly; "mother told me about it, and I'm very sorry. And I'm called Marjory, generally. Shall you like school, do you think?"

"I might," said I, "if—if it wasn't for the boys!"

"Boys aren't bad," she said; "ours are rather nice, I think. But perhaps you don't know many?"

"I know one," I replied.

"How old is *he?*" she wished to know.

"Not very old—about three, I think," I said. I had never wished till then that my only male acquaintance had been of less tender years, but I felt now that he was rather small, and saw that Marjory was of the same opinion.

"Why, he's a baby!" she said; "I thought you

meant a *real* boy. And is that all the boys you know? Are you fond of games?"

"Some games—very," said I.

"What's your favorite game?" she demanded.

"Bezique," I answered, "or draughts."

"I mean *out*-door games; draughts are in-door games—*is* in-door games, I mean—no, *are* an in-door game—and *that* doesn't sound grammar! But haven't you ever played cricket? Not ever, really? I like it dreadfully myself, only I'm not allowed to play with the boys, and I'm sure I can bat well enough for the second eleven—Cartwright said I could last term—and I can bowl round-hand, and it's all no use, just because I was born a girl! Wouldn't you like a game at something? They haven't taken in the croquet-hoops yet; shall we play at that?"

But again I had to confess my ignorance of what was then the popular garden game.

"What do you generally do to amuse yourself, then?" she inquired.

"I read, generally, or paint texts or outlines. Sometimes"—(I thought this accomplishment would surely appeal to her)—"sometimes I do woolwork!"

"I don't think I would tell the boys that," she advised rather gravely; she evidently considered me a very desperate case. "It's such a pity, your not knowing any games. Suppose I taught you croquet, now? It would be something to go on with, and you'll soon learn if you pay attention and do exactly what I tell you."

I submitted myself meekly to her direction, and Marjory enjoyed her office of instructress for a time, until my extreme slowness wore out her patience, and she began to make little outbursts of disgust, for which she invariably apologized. "That's enough for to-day!" she said at last; "I'll take you again to-morrow. But you really must try and pick up games, Cameron, or you'll never be liked. Let me see, I wonder if there's time to teach you a little foot-ball. I think I could do that."

Before she could make any further arrangements the tea-bell rang; but when I lay down that night in my strange, cold bed, hemmed round by other beds, which were only less formidable than if they had been occupied, I felt less friendless than I might have done, and dreamed all night that Marjory was teaching me something I understood to be cricket, which, however, was more like a bloated kind of backgammon.

The next day Marjory was allowed to go out walking with me, and I came home feeling that I had known her for quite a long time, while her manner to me had acquired a tone even more protecting than before, and she began to betray an anxiety as to my school prospects which filled me with uneasiness.

"I am so afraid the boys won't like the way you talk," she said on one occasion.

"I used to be told I spoke very correctly," I said, verdantly enough.

"But not like boys talk. You see, Cameron, I ought to know, with such a lot of them about. I tell you what I could do, though, I could teach you most of their words—only I must run and ask mother first if I may. Teaching slang isn't the same as using it on my own account, is it?"

Marjory darted off impulsively to ask leave, to return presently with a slow step and downcast face. "I mayn't," she announced. "Mother says 'Certainly not'; so there's an end of that! Still, I think myself it's a decided pity."

And more than once that day she would observe, as if to herself, "I do wish they had let you come to school in different collars!"

I knew that these remarks, and others of a similar tendency, were prompted by her interest in my welfare, and I admired her too heartily already to be offended by them: still, I can not say they added to my peace of mind.

And on the last evening of the holidays she said "Good-night" to me with some solemnity. "Everything will be different after this," she said; "I sha'n't be able to see nearly so much of you, because I'm not allowed to be much with the boys. But I shall be looking after you all the time, Cameron, and seeing how you get on. And oh! I do hope you will try to be a popular kind of boy!"

. . . . . .

I'm afraid I must own that this desire of Marjory's was not realized. I do not know that I tried to be—and I certainly was not—a popular boy.

The other boys, I now know, were by no means bad specimens of the English schoolboy, as will be evident when I state that, for a time, my deep mourning was held by them to give me a claim to their forbearance.

But I had an unfortunate tendency to sudden floods of tears (apparently for no cause whatever, really from some secret spring of association, such as I remember was touched when I first found myself learning Latin from the same primer over which my mother and I had puzzled together), and these outbursts at first aroused my companions' contempt, and finally their open ridicule.

I could not conceal my shrinking dislike to their society, which was not calculated to make them more favorably disposed toward me; while my tastes, my expressions, my ways of looking at things, were all at total variance with their own standards.

The general disapproval might well have shown itself in a harsher manner than that of merely ignoring my existence—and it says much for the tone of the school that it did not; unfortunately, I felt their indifference almost as keenly as I had dreaded their notice.

From my master I met with more favor, for I had been thoroughly well grounded, and found, besides, a temporary distraction in my school-work; but this was hardly likely to render me more beloved by my fellows,

and so it came to pass that every day saw my isolation more complete.

Something, however, made me anxious to hide this from Marjory's eyes; and whenever she happened to be looking on at us in the school-grounds or the playing-fields, I made dismal attempts to appear on terms of equality with the rest, and would hang about a group with as much pretense of belonging to it as I thought prudent.

If she had had more opportunities of questioning me, she would have found me out long before; as it was, the only occasion on which I was near her was at the weekly drawing-lesson, when, although she drew less and talked more than the Professor quite approved of, she was obliged to restrict herself to a conversation which did not admit of confidences.

But this negative, neutral-tinted misery was not to last; I was harmless enough, but then to some natures nothing is so offensive as inoffensiveness. My isolation was certain to raise me up an enemy in time, and he came in the person of one Clarence Ormsby.

He was a sturdy, good-looking fellow, about two years older than myself, good at games, and though not brilliant in other respects, rather idle than dull; he was popular in the school, and I believe his general disposition was by no means bad; but there must have been some hidden flaw in his nature which might never have disclosed itself for any other but me.

For me he had displayed, almost from the first, one of those special antipathies that want but little excuse to ripen into hatred. My personal appearance—I had the misfortune to be a decidedly plain boy—happened to be particularly displeasing to him, and, as he had an unsparing tongue, he used it to cover me with ridicule, until gradually, finding that I did not retaliate, he indulged in acts of petty oppression, which, though not strictly bullying, were more harassing and humiliating.

I suspect now that if I had made ever so slight a stand at the outset, I should have escaped further molestation, but I was not pugnacious by nature, and never made the experiment; partly, probably, from a theory on which I had been reared that all violence was vulgar, but chiefly from a tendency, unnatural in one of my age and sex, to find a sentimental satisfaction in a certain degree of unhappiness.

So that I can neither pity myself nor expect pity from others for woes which were so essentially my own creation, though they resulted, alas! in misery that was not artificial.

It was inevitable that quick-sighted Marjory should discover the subjection into which I had fallen, and her enlightenment was brought about in this manner: Ormsby and I were together alone, shortly before morning school, and he came toward me with an exercise of mine from which he had just been copying his own, for we were in the same classes, despite the difference in our

ages, and he was in the habit of profiting thus by my industry.

"Thanks, Cameron," he said, with a sweetness which I distrusted, for he was not, as a rule, so lavish in his gratitude. "I've copied out that exercise of yours, but it's written so beastly badly that you'd better do it again."

With which he deliberately tore the page he had been copying from to scraps, which he threw in my face, and strolled out and down to the play-ground.

I was preparing submissively to do the exercise over again as well as I could in the short time that was left, when I was startled by a low cry of indignation, and looking round, saw Marjory standing in the doorway, and knew by her face that she had seen all.

"Has Ormsby done that to you before?" she inquired.

"Once or twice he has," said I.

"And you let him!" she cried. "Oh, Cameron!"

"What can I do?" I said.

"I know what *I* would do," she replied. "I would slap his face, or pinch him. I wouldn't put up with it!"

"Boys don't slap one another, or pinch," I said, not displeased to find a weak place in her knowledge of us.

"Well, they do *something!*" she said; "a real boy would. But I don't think you are a real boy, Cameron. *I'll* show you what to do. Where's the exercise that—

that *pig* copied? Ah! I see it. And now—look!" (Here she tore his page as he had torn mine.)

"Now for an envelope!" and from the Doctor's own desk she took an envelope, in which she placed the fragments, and wrote on the outside in her round, childish hand, "With Marjory's compliments, for being a bully."

"He won't do that again," she said, gleefully.

"He'll do worse," I said in dismay; "I shall have to pay for it. Marjory, why didn't you leave things alone? I didn't complain—you know I didn't!"

She turned upon me, as well she might, in supreme disdain. "Oh! what a coward you are. I wouldn't believe all Cartwright told me about you when I asked—but I see it's all true. Why don't you stick up for yourself?"

I muttered something or other.

"But you *ought* to. You'll never get on unless," said Marjory, very decidedly. "Now, promise me you will, next time."

I sat there silent. I was disgusted with myself, and meanly angry with her for having rendered me so.

"Then, listen," she said impressively. "I promised I would look after you, and I did mean to, but it's no use if you won't help yourself. So, unless you say you won't go on being a coward any more, I shall have to leave you to go your own way, and not take the least interest in you ever again."

"Then you may," I said stolidly; "I don't care." I

wondered even while I spoke the words what could be impelling me to treat spirited, warm-hearted Marjory like that, and I hate myself still at the recollection.

"Good-by, then," she said very quietly; "I'm sorry, Cameron." And she went out without another word.

When Ormsby came in, I watched him apprehensively as he read the envelope upon his desk and saw its contents; he said nothing, however, though he shot a malignant glance in my direction; but the lesson was not lost upon him, for from that time he avoided all open ill-treatment of me, and even went so far as to assume a friendliness, which might have re-assured me, had I not instinctively felt that it masked the old dislike.

I was constantly the victim of mishaps, in the shape of missing and defaced books, ink mysteriously spilled or strangely adulterated, and, though I could never trace them to any definite hand, they seemed too systematic to be quite accidental; still I made no sign, and hoped thus to disarm my persecutor—if persecutor there were.

As for my companions, I knew that in no case would they take the trouble to interfere in my behalf; they had held aloof from the first, the general opinion (which I now perceive was not unjust) being that "I deserved all I got."

And my estrangement from Marjory grew wider and wider; she never spoke to me now when we sat near one another at the drawing class; if she looked at me it was by stealth, and with a glance that I thought sometimes

was contemptuously pitiful, and sometimes half fancied betrayed a willingness to return to the old comradeship.

But I nursed my stupid, sullen pride, though my heart ached with it at times. For I had now come to love Marjory devotedly, with a love that, though I was a boy and she was a child, was as genuine a passion as any I have felt since.

The chance of seeing her now and then, of hearing her speak—though it was not to me—gave me the one interest in my life, which, but for her, I could not have borne. But this love of mine was a very far-off and disinterested worship, after all. I could not imagine myself ever speaking of it to her, or picture her as accepting it. Marjory was too thorough a child to be vulgarized in that way, even in thought.

The others were healthy, matter-of-fact youths, to whom Marjory was an ordinary girl, and who certainly did not indulge in any strained sentiment respecting her; it was left for me to idealize her; but of that, at least, I can not feel ashamed, or believe that it did me anything but good.

And the days went on, until it wanted but a fortnight to Christmas, and most of us were thinking of the coming holidays, and preparing with a not unpleasant excitement for the examinations, which were all that barred the way to them now. I was to spend my Christmas with my uncle and cousins, who would by that time be

able to receive me; but I felt no very pleasurable anticipations, for my cousins were all boys, and from boys I thought I knew what to expect.

One afternoon Ormsby came to me with the request that I would execute a trifling commission for him in the adjoining village; he himself, he said, was confined to bounds, but he had a shilling he wanted to lay out at a small fancy-shop we were allowed to patronize, and he considered me the best person to be intrusted. I was simply to spend the shilling on anything I thought best, for he had entire confidence, he gave me to understand, in my taste and judgment. I think I suspected a design of some sort, but I did not dare to refuse, and then his manner to some extent disarmed me.

I took the shilling, therefore, with which I bought some article—I forget what—and got back to the school at dusk. The boys had all gone down to tea except Ormsby, who was waiting for me up in the empty schoolroom.

"Well?" he said, and I displayed my purchase, only to find that I had fallen into a trap.

When I think how easily I was the dupe of that not too subtle artifice, which was only half malicious, I could smile, if I did not know how it ended.

"How much was that?" he asked, contemptuously, "twopence-halfpenny? Well, if you choose to give a shilling for it, I'm not going to pay, that's all. So just give me back my shilling!"

Now, as my weekly allowance consisted of threepence, which was confiscated for some time in advance (as I think he knew), to provide fines for my mysteriously-stained dictionaries, this was out of the question, as I represented.

"Then go back to the shop and change it," said he; "I won't have that thing!"

"Tell me what you would like instead, and I will," I stipulated, not unreasonably.

He laughed; his little scheme was working so admirably. "That's not the bargain," he said; "you're bound to get me something I like. I'm not obliged to tell you what it is."

But even I was driven to protest against such flagrant unfairness. "I didn't know you meant that," I said, "or I'm sure I shouldn't have gone. I went to oblige *you*, Ormsby."

"No, you didn't," he said, "you went because I told you. And you'll go again."

"Not unless you tell me what I'm to get," I said.

"I tell you what I believe," he said; "you never spent the whole shilling at all on that; you bought something for yourself with the rest, you young swindler. No wonder you won't go back to the shop."

This was, of course, a mere taunt flung out by his inventive fancy, but as he persisted in it, and threatened exposure and a variety of consequences, I became alarmed, for I had little doubt that, innocent as I was,

I could be made very uncomfortable by accusations which would find willing hearers.

He stood there enjoying my perplexity and idly twisting a piece of string round and round his fingers. At length he said, "Well, I don't want to be hard on you. You may go and change this for me even now, if you like. I'll give you three minutes to think it over, and you can come down into the play-ground when I sing out, and tell me what you mean to do. And you had better be sharp in coming, too, or it will be the worse for you."

He took his cap, and presently I heard him going down the steps to the play-ground. I would have given worlds to go and join the rest at tea, but I did not dare, and remained in the school-room, which was dim just then, for the gas was lowered, and while I stood there by the fireplace, trembling in the cold air which stole in through the door Ormsby had left open, Marjory came in by the other one, and was going straight to her father's desk when she saw me.

Her first impulse seemed to be to take no notice, but something in my face or attitude made her alter her mind and come straight to me, holding out her hand.

"Cameron," she said, "shall we be friends again?"

"Yes, Marjory," I said; I could not have said any more just then.

"You look so miserable, I couldn't bear it any longer," she said, "so I *had* to make it up. You know

I was only pretending crossness, Cameron, all the time, because I really thought it was best. But it doesn't seem to have done you much good, and I did promise to take care of you. What is it? Ormsby again?"

"Yes," I said, and told her the story of the commission.

"Oh, you stupid boy!" she cried, "couldn't you see he only wanted to pick a quarrel? And if you change it now, he'll make you change it again, and the next time, and the next after that—I know he will!"

Here Ormsby's voice shouted from below, "Now then, you, Cameron, time's up!"

"What is he doing down there?" asked Marjory, and her indignation rose higher when she heard.

"Now, Cameron, be brave; go down and tell him once for all he may just keep what he has, and be thankful. Whatever it is, it's good enough for *him*, I'm sure!"

But I still hung back. "It's no use, Marjory; he'll tell every one I cheated him—he says he will!"

"That he shall not!" she cried; "I won't have it. I'll go myself, and tell him what I think of him, and make him stop treating you like this."

Some faint glimmer of manliness made me ashamed to allow her thus to fight my battles. "No, Marjory, not you!" I said; "I will go: I'll say what you want me to say!"

But it was too late. I saw her for just a second at

the door, my impetuous, generous little Marjory, as she flung back her pretty hair in a certain spirited way she had, and nodded to me encouragingly.

And then—I can hardly think of it calmly even now—there came a sharp scream, and the sound of a fall, and, after that, silence.

Sick with fear, I rushed to the head of the steps, and looked down into the brown gloom.

"Keep where you are for a minute!" I heard Ormsby cry out; "it's all right—she is not hurt; now you can come down."

I was down in another instant, at the foot of the stairs, where, in the patch of faint light that fell from the door above, lay Marjory, with Ormsby bending over her insensible form.

"She's dead!" I cried in my terror, as I saw her white face.

"I tell you she's all right," said he, impatiently; "there's nothing to make a fuss about. She slipped coming down and cut her forehead—that's all."

"Marjory, speak to me—don't look like that; tell me you're not hurt much!" I implored her; but she only moaned a little, and her eyes remained fast shut.

"It's no use worrying her now, you know," said Ormsby, more gently. "Just help me to get her round to the kitchen-door, and tell somebody."

We carried her there between us, and, amid a scene of terrible confusion and distress, Marjory, still insensi-

ble, was carried into the library, and a man sent off in hot haste for the surgeon.

A little later Ormsby and I were sent for to the study, where Dr. Dering, whose face was white and drawn as I had never seen it before, questioned us closely as to our knowledge of the accident.

Ormsby could only say that he was out in the playground, when he saw somebody descending the steps, and heard a fall, after which he ran up and found Marjory.

"I sent her into the school-room to bring my paper-knife," said the Doctor; "if I had but gone myself—But why should she have gone outside on a frosty night like this?"

"Oh, Dr. Dering!" I broke out, "I'm afraid—I'm afraid she went for me!"

I saw Ormsby's face as I spoke, and there was a look upon it which made me pity him.

"And you sent my poor child out on your errand, Cameron! Could you not have done it yourself?"

"I wish I had!" I exclaimed; "oh, I wish I had! I tried to stop her, and then—and then it was too late. Please tell me, sir, is she badly hurt?"

"How do I know?" he said, harshly; there, I can't speak of this just yet: go, both of you."

There was little work done at evening preparation that night; the whole school was buzzing with curiosity and speculation, while we heard doors opening and shut-

ting around, and the wheels of the doctor's gig as it rolled up the chestnut avenue.

I sat with my hands shielding my eyes and ears, engaged to all appearance with the books before me, while my restless thoughts were employed in making earnest resolutions for the future.

At last I saw my cowardice in its true light, and I felt impatient to tell Marjory that I did so, to prove to her that I had really reformed: but when would an opportunity come? I might not see her again for days, perhaps not at all till after the holidays, but I would not let myself dwell upon such a contingency as that, and, to banish it, tried to picture what Marjory would say, and how she would look, when I was allowed to see her again.

After evening prayers, read by one of the assistant-masters, for the Doctor did not appear again, we were enjoined to go up to our bedrooms with as little noise as possible; and we had been in bed some time before Sutcliffe, the old butler, came up as usual to put out the lights.

On this occasion he was assailed by a fire of eager whispers from every door: "Sutcliffe, hi! old Sutty, how is she?" but he did not seem to hear, until a cry louder than the rest brought him to our room.

"For God's sake, gentlemen, don't!" he said, in a hoarse whisper, as he turned out the light; "they'll hear you down-stairs."

"But how is she? do you know—better?"

"Ay," he said, "she's better. She'll be over her trouble soon, will Miss Marjory!"

A low murmur of delight ran round the room, which the butler tried to check in vain.

"Don't!" he said again, "wait—wait till morning. . . . Go to sleep quiet now, and I'll come up first thing and tell you."

He had no sooner turned his back than the general relief broke out irrepressibly, Ormsby being especially demonstrative. "Didn't I tell you fellows so?" he said, triumphantly; "as if it was likely a plucky girl like Marjory would mind a little cut like that. She'll be all right in the morning, you see!"

But this confidence jarred upon me, who could not pretend to share it, until I was unable to restrain the torturing anxiety I felt.

"You're wrong—all of you!" I cried; "I'm sure she's not better. Didn't you hear how Sutcliffe said it? She's *worse*—she may even be dying!"

I met with the usual treatment of a prophet of evil. "You young muff," I was told on all sides, "who asked your opinion? Who are you, to know better than any one else?"

Ormsby attacked me hotly for trying to produce an alarm, and I was recommended to hold my tongue and go to sleep.

I said no more, but I could not sleep; the others

dropped off one by one, Ormsby being the last, but I lay awake listening and thinking, until the dread and suspense grew past bearing. I *must* know the truth. I would go down and find the Doctor, and beg him to tell me; he might be angry and punish me—but that would be nothing in comparison with the relief of knowing my fear was unfounded.

Stealthily I slipped out of bed, stole through the dim room to the door, and down the old staircase, which creaked under my bare feet. The dog in the yard howled as I passed the big window, through which the stars were sparkling frostily in the keen blue sky. Outside the room in which Marjory lay I listened, but could hear nothing. At least she was sleeping then, and, relieved already, I went on down to the hall.

The big clock on a table there was ticking solemnly, like a slow footfall; the lamp was alight, so the Doctor must be still up. With a heart that beat loud I went to his study-door and lifted my hand to knock, when from within rose a sound at which the current of my blood stopped and ran backward—the terrible, heart-broken grief of a grown man.

Boy as I was, I felt that an agony like that was sacred; besides, I knew the worst then.

I dragged myself up-stairs again, cold to the bones, with a brain that was frozen too. My one desire was to reach my bed, cover my face, and let the tears flow: though, when I did regain it, no tears and no thoughts

came. I lay there and shivered for some time, with a stony, stunned sensation, and then I slept—as if Marjory were well.

The next morning the bell under the cupola did not clang, and Sutcliffe came up, with the direction that we were to go down very quietly, and not to draw up the window-blinds; and then we all knew what had happened during the night.

There was a very genuine grief, though none knew Marjory as I had known her; the more emotional wept, the older ones indulged in little semi-pious conventional comments, oddly foreign to their usual tone; all—even the most thoughtless—felt the same hush and awe overtake them.

I could not cry; I felt nothing, except a dull rage at my own insensibility. Marjory was dead—and I had no tears.

Morning school was a mere pretense that day; we dreaded, for almost the first time, to see the Doctor's face, but he did not show himself, and the arrangements necessary for the breaking up of the school were made by the matron.

Some, including Ormsby and myself, could not be taken in for some days, during which we had to remain at the school: days of shadow and monotony, with occasional ghastly outbreaks of the high spirits which nothing could repress, even in that house of mourning.

The time passed at last, until it was the evening of

the day on which Marjory had been left to her last sleep.

The poor father and mother had been unable to stay in the house now that it no longer covered even what had been their child, and the only two, besides the matron and one or two servants who still remained there, were Ormsby and I, who were both to leave on the following morning.

I would rather have been alone just then with any one but Ormsby, though he had never since that fatal night taken the slightest notice of me; he looked worn and haggard to a degree that made me sure he must have cared more for Marjory than I could have imagined, and yet he would break at times into a feverish gayety which surprised and repelled me.

He was in one of these latter moods that evening, as we sat, as far apart as possible, in the empty, firelit school-room.

"Now, Cameron," he said, as he came up to me and struck me boisterously on the shoulder, "wake up, man. I've been in the blues long enough. We can't go on moping always, on the night before the holidays, too! Do something to make yourself sociable—talk, can't you?"

"No, I can't," I said, and, breaking from him, went to one of the windows and looked vacantly out into the blackness, which reflected the long room, with its dingy, greenish maps, and the desks and forms glistening in the fire-beams.

The ice-bound state in which I had been so long was slowly passing away, now that the scene by the little grave that raw, cheerless morning had brought home remorselessly the truth that Marjory was indeed gone, lost to me forever.

I could see now what she had been to me; how she had made my great loneliness endurable; how, with her innocent, fearless nature, she had tried to rouse me from spiritless and unmanly dejection. And I could never hope to please her now by proving that I had learned the lesson; she had gone from me to some world infinitely removed, in which I was forgotten, and my pitiful trials and struggles could be nothing to her any more!

I was once more alone, and this second bereavement revived in all its crushing desolation the first bitter loss which it so closely followed.

So, as I stood there at the window, my unnatural calm could hold out no longer; the long-frozen tears thawed, and I could weep for the first time since Marjory died.

But I was not allowed to sorrow undisturbed; I felt a rough grasp on my arm, as Ormsby asked me angrily, "What was the matter now?"

"Oh, Marjory, come to me," I could only cry; "I can't bear it!"

"Stop that, do you hear?" he said savagely; "I won't have it! Who are you to cry about her, when—but for *you*—"

He got no farther; the bitter truth in such a taunt, coming from him, stung me to ungovernable rage. I turned and struck him full in the mouth, which I cut open with my clinched hand.

His eyes became all pupil. "You shall pay me for that!" he said through his teeth, and, forcing me against a desk, he caught up a large T-square which lay near; he was far the stronger, and I felt myself powerless in his grasp. Passion and pain had made him beside himself for the moment, and he did not know how formidable a weapon the heavily-weighted ruler might become in his hand.

I shut my eyes: I think I rather hoped he would kill me, and then perhaps I might go where Marjory was. I did not cry for help, and it would have been useless if I had done so, for the school-room was a long way from the kitchen and offices of that rambling old house.

But before the expected blow was dealt I felt his grasp relax, and heard the ruler fall with a sudden clatter on the floor. "Look," he whispered, in a voice I did not recognize, "*look there!*"

And when I opened my eyes, I saw Marjory standing between us!

She looked just as I had always seen her: I think that even the after-life could not make Marjory look purer, more innocent and lovely than she was on earth. My first feeling was a wild conviction that it had all been some strange mistake—that Marjory was not dead.

"Oh, Marjory, Marjory!" I cried in my joy, "is it really you? You have come back, after all, and it is not true!"

She looked at us both without speaking for a moment; her dear brown eyes had lost their old childish sparkle, and were calm and serious as if with a deeper knowledge.

Ormsby had cowered back to the opposite wall, covering his face. "Go away!" he gasped. "Cameron—*you* ask her to go. She—she liked you. . . . I never meant it. Tell her I never meant to do it!"

I could not understand such terror at the sight of Marjory, even if she had been what he thought her; but there was a reason in his case.

"You were going to hurt Cameron," said Marjory, at length, and her voice sounded sad and grave.

"I don't care, Marjory," I cried—"not now you are here!"

She motioned me back: "You must not come nearer," she said. "I can not stay long, and I must speak to Ormsby. Ormsby, have you told any one?"

"No," he said, shaking all over; "it could do no good. . . . . I thought I needn't."

"Tell *him*," said Marjory.

"Must I? Oh, no, no!" he groaned, "don't make me do that!"

"You must," she answered, and he turned to me with a sullen fear. "It was like this," he began: "that

night, when I was waiting for you down there—I had some string, and it struck me, all in a moment, that it would be fun to trip you up. I didn't mean to hurt you—only frighten you. I fastened the string across a little way from the bottom. And then"—(he had to moisten his lips here before he could go on)—"then *she* came down, and I tried to catch her—and couldn't—no, I couldn't!"

"Is that all?" asked Marjory, as he stopped short.

"I cut the string and hid it before you came. Now you know, and you may tell if you like!"

"Cameron, you will never tell, will you—as long as he lives?" said Marjory. "You must promise."

I was horrified by what I had heard; but her eyes were upon me, and I promised.

"And you, Ormsby, promise me to be kinder to him after this."

He could not speak; but he made a sign of assent.

"And now," said Marjory, "shake hands with him, and forgive him, Cameron."

But I revolted: "No, Marjory, I can't; not now—when I know this!"

"Cameron, dear," she said, "you won't let me go away sorry, will you? and I must go so soon. For my sake, when I wish it so!"

I went to Ormsby, and took his cold, passive hand. "I do forgive him, Marjory," I said.

She smiled brightly at us both. "And you won't forget, either of you?" she said. "And, Greville, you

will be brave, and take your own part now. Good-by, good-by."

I tried to reach her. "Don't leave me; take me with you, Marjory, dear. Dear Marjory, don't go!" But there was only firelit space where she had stood, though the sound of her pleading, pathetic voice was still in the air.

Ormsby remained for a few minutes leaning against a desk, with his face buried in his arms, and I heard him struggling with his sobs. At last he rose, and left the room without a word.

But I stayed there where I had last seen Marjory, till the fire died down, and the hour was late, for I was glad to be alone with the new and solemn joy that had come to me. For she had not forgotten me where she was; I had been allowed to see her once more, and it might even be that I should see her again.

And I resolved then that when she came she should find me more worthy of her.

. . . . . .

From that night my character seemed to enter upon a new phase, and when I returned to school it was to begin my second term under better auspices.

My cousins had welcomed me cordially among them, and as I mastered the lesson of give and take, of respecting one's self in respecting others, which I needed to learn, my early difficulties vanished with the weakness that had produced them.

By Ormsby I was never again molested; in word and deed, he was true to the promise exacted from him during that strange scene. At first he avoided me as being too painfully connected with the past, but by degrees, as he recognized that his secret was safe in my keeping, we grew to understand one another better, although it would be too much to say that we ever became intimate.

After he went to Sandhurst I lost sight of him, and only a few months since the news of his death in the Soudan, where he fell gallantly, made me sorrowfully aware that we should never meet again.

I had a lingering fancy that Marjory might appear to me once more; but I have long since given up all hope of that in this life, and for what may come after I am content to wait.

But the charge my child-friend had undertaken was at an end on the night she was allowed to return to earth and determine the crisis of two lives; there is nothing now to call the bright and gracious little spirit back, for her influence will never leave me.

No one seemed to know exactly what to say when the speaker's voice, which had been growing lower and lower, ceased altogether, and the pathetic story of Marjory's love was at an end. It seemed to the listeners more like a personal confession than any of the preceding tales, and therefore they felt that literary criticism would be out of place. At length some one said—it was difficult to recognize the voice—"I should be surprised to learn that that boy's life

was not a noble and manly one, and I dare say a very happy one, too. Surely, hardly any greater blessing can befall either man or woman than to have found and loved an ideal, and then to have had it removed while still wholly noble, and before any experience had come to prove it was but a poor actual after all, and before any hateful discovery had marred the perfect sincerity of worship. I do not know whether this sounds cruel, but it seems true to me; at least I can not think of any worse fate than to have given one's self wholly in perfect faith to an ideal which one day had collapsed, and stained everything else in life with the dust of its miserable fragments." Nobody ever knew who it was that spoke: some thought it was *Beatrice*, others maintained it must have been the Romancer.

The next day, before they were fairly awake in the morning, the passengers of the *Bavaria* knew that they were running into a storm. During the night the motion of the vessel had gradually increased, and by the time it was daylight she was rolling heavily, and the dark green water was above the port-holes half the time. Below, the timbers creaked and groaned, things that were hung against the wall stood out straight with an apparently ridiculous disregard of the law of gravitation, the crockery rattled, the stewards stumbled heavily against the partitions as they made their way along the gangways, the big portmanteaus chased the little ones all over the floor, and every now and then a great echoing blow drowned every other sound, as a mountain of water came thundering over the bows and went switching along the deck over the heads of the scared passengers in their berths. To get up was to face certain wretchedness; and so everybody lay in bed, with or without good cause, until late in the morning. The whole day was a miserable one; but in one way or another it passed, and the weather moderating a little at night, the party, who now sought each other out and clung together like magnetic particles, were

seated in a compact group in a corner of the companion-way stairs. "One thing is quite certain," *Beatrice* was saying, "and that is, we will not have another ghost-story. We have had three tales, and three ghosts, and another in such dreadful weather as this would be more than anybody could bear." "There is only one person," remarked the Tragedian, "whom I feel I can thoroughly depend upon to carry out your wishes. Come," he added, turning toward the Editor, "give us a tale of love, or music." "Or both," put in the Romancer. And with the promptitude which distinguishes his craft, and the chivalry which is his personal characteristic, the Editor did.

THE ACTION TO THE WORD.

By WALTER HERRIES POLLOCK.

One of the greatest, if not the greatest, of the social pleasures of my life has been derived from the hours I have been privileged to spend with my dear old friend and teacher, Von Carus, the violinist. The public knows him as a master of his art to a certain extent, and he has always been a favorite with them; but his success and his reputation have never been of the kind that his qualities should have commanded. Here and there only will you find a true lover of music who, when this or that great name of a violin-magician is cited, will say half to himself if there be no sympathetic soul by his side, "Yes, a fine player; but nothing to Von Carus, if the public did but know it." "Say rather," I have heard another amateur add, "if he would but let the public know it."

It is far from me to assert that the public was in the wrong in this matter—almost as far as to assert that Von Carus was in the wrong. All who have followed the notes as true critics must have observed and have been puzzled by such cases of mutual misunderstanding be-

tween artist and audience. Sometimes it comes from what a French critic has called "*émotions qui ne dépassent point la rampe*," and that the case is, I fear, frequent, and grievous at least to the artist. With Von Carus it was not so; the public felt his emotion, and wondered that it did not touch them more nearly; he felt that there was something wanting in his contact with them, and—but I am trying vainly to describe what no description of mine can compass, and must fall back on simple statement of fact derived from what I have seen and heard. The large musical, really musical public—the public of the gallery when Italian opera was an institution in England, and of the orchestra in St. James's Hall now—said among each other, "This is wonderful playing; why does it not touch us?" The clever-stupid public of the stalls—the University young men and young women who had caught the cant of music and knew one hair's-breadth of it from the intellectual side—said, "Admirable execution, but he can't touch So-and-so's music," and, so saying, gave a half sigh, half snort, which expressed extraordinary acquaintance with modern common-room talk, and fell gracefully back into their chairs. Musicians simply wondered. I, whose sole claim to the title of musician is due to the instruction of Von Carus himself, wondered with them, but have wondered somewhat less since I heard one of the many stories he has told me as friend to friend, not as teacher to pupil.

He took few pupils—I can not get away from his fascinating "personality," as the modern school has it—and with those few he was not apt to be content. I think he approved of me merely because I had fathomed the depth of my own ignorance, and came to him feeling that, if I were capable of learning at all, I should learn from him more of the heart of the mystery of music than years of the conventional teaching I had already partly acquired could give me.

"It is already something," he would say to me in the days of our first acquaintance, "to know that you know nothing of this wonderful thing called music. It has taken me more than half a lifetime to find that out, and you—you know it by instinct; and what is more wonderful, the teaching of the schools has not deprived you of your instinct. Therefore, out of my own ignorance I will give you whatever hint I can to the finding of the secrets of harmony and melody. Do not tell me" (I had not) "that the two can be separate for the Spirit of Music." Then he would smoke silently, and then he would give me a lesson profound in knowledge, brilliant in illustration, burning with life and passion. And then he would fall to smoking again, and say with a half-assumed sadness, "But all this it is no good to talk to the amateur who wants to find the royal road, that exists as much as the road to King Solomon's mines exists. And all this, well! well! I can not express to the great public, that, say what you will, is after

all the best judge." With such sayings I always left him to commune in silence, and that is one strong reason why our friendship never faltered.

However, it is not with this man, whom I loved almost as the pupil loved Seraphael in the beautiful story of "Charles Auchester," that I have now to deal, so much as with one of the many stories that he told me —the one that threw, to my thinking, the most light upon his character and career. How he came to tell it was thus: In one of my cherished evenings with him our talk chanced upon "The Huguenots," and Von Carus, who was one of the few German musicians who deeply admired that Dumas (the father, not the son) of opera, had illustrated some of the soprano passages with the violin which was excellent in public, inspired in private.

Presently he asked me to recall to him, as best I could on the piano, the days when that great work drew a fit, though numerous, audience to listen to its fine interpretation at the old Her Majesty's—the days when neither lyric nor dramatic stage in England had been ruined by star salaries and vulgar talk about "social status." I played on, Von Carus occasionally stopping me with a reproof or a hint, until we arrived at the last act, the act which young opera-goers have never seen on the stage in England. As I began it Von Carus stopped me to remind me of this.

"So," he said, "you attack for me that great piece of

dramatic music. *So ist's gut.* And you wondered a little time ago at the dying of grand opera on English stages. *Lieber Freund*, when they began to end that opera with the scene of Valentine and Raoul, I knew that opera, as opera should be, was doomed. That a true Jew's music should be so truncated to suit the sham Jews who filled the stalls, and who wanted to catch their dirty trains! *Lieber Herr Je!*"

So he subsided in inarticulate wrath, and I went on playing until I came to that soul-stirring prayer of Marcel's in which he and his companion see heaven opening to them in its glory, even amid the puny thunder and turmoil of earthly persecution. I began the first notes and stopped, overcome by the remembrance of the extraordinary effect the scene had produced upon me when I had last heard it, in the old days when music was the real object of the Italian opera in London.

"I can not help stopping," I said, "to ask you if I am right in thinking that Sponzini, the last singer of Marcel whom I heard in that scene, was as great an artist as one could wish to hear and see?"

"You are right," answered Von Carus; "he was, short of Lablache, the greatest expression of that wonderful appeal that you can imagine. The English public, then already brutalized for opera by the star and stall system, did not taste him because he was not puffed, and the *virtuosi*, with some pedantry, refused him full

recognition because, like Ronconi, he was not always sure of his intonation. But he was a great singer and a great actor. Mamma Tosi," he added, mentioning the greatest teacher and critic of singing this age has known, "will tell you the same if you ask her. But, *mein Bester*, I am glad for other reasons that you stopped to ask me that question. It makes it more easy for me to beg you not to go on with that scene."

"Am I wrong?" I began to ask, egotism overpowering discretion, when he interrupted me with, "In your playing, my child? No, that is well, very well for an amateur. There are other reasons."

As he spoke the look of sadness that I had often seen on his face came over it, and, what was unusual, stayed there. He sank back in his chair thinking and puffing heavily at his pipe. I, ashamed of my impulsive question, struck one or two chords softly to prevent his or my ear from remembering discontentedly an unfinished theme, and sat opposite to him awaiting his continued silence or his speech.

"I will tell you," said Von Carus. "The thing itself happened just about the time when first Italian opera ceased to be interpreted on English stages by Italians, when the Babel-collection of French tenors, Polish or German sopranos, Alsatian baritones and bassi, that odd collection of *Was Sie wünschen* in the way of singing nationalities that went on for so many years had first begun. Then, in the early time, it was always Signor

and Signora in the bills, whatever the country of the singer, and that was at least as sensible as the silly kind of compromises they introduced afterward."

This talk Von Carus delivered, as I thought, with a somewhat exaggerated air of lightness and conscious irrelevance, and when he went on he fell into a graver tone as he said:

"But the beginning of the story I am going to tell you goes back many years further than that; it goes back, indeed, to the early days of my own youth, when I was a humble member of a small band at a small theatre in Germany. Small, I mean, in its importance, for the stage was large enough—too large, indeed, for the scanty chorus that our small State aid afforded. For the town itself, it is one of which comparatively few English opera-goers have heard; you who have traveled in Germany probably know it, and therefore I shall not try to describe it exactly, any more than I shall give you the real names of the parties concerned. However," continued the violinist, "let me get on to the story without more forewords. It is not an enticing one to tell, and I would not tell it but to you.

"The first time I saw her was on a summer evening. I had walked to the theatre through the streets of the strange old-fashioned town, which always had to me such an air of unreality, with the vague reminiscences of a past royalty that hung about its operatic-looking buildings. I was tired both of the place and of my business

there, and the knowledge that a first appearance was to take place that night had not roused me from my dreamy discontent. She had appeared at other towns—of no European fame—with success, and she came to our company *als Gast.* A rehearsal had been arranged for the morning, but she arrived late and tired, after the band had been graciously excused from dancing attendance for her doubtful arrival any longer. She had gone through the mere business of her scenes with the stage manager, and of course she knew her words and music well enough to dispense in such a case with full rehearsal. Her name was—I will call her Fräulein della Mandola—and she made her first appearance as Agatha in 'Der Freischütz.'

"When she came on the stage I was still moody, and was looking at nothing but my part of the score, which, as it seemed to me, I knew already too well. But her voice—when she began to sing then I looked up, and I saw on the stage the most beautiful, the most attractive creature I have ever seen. Imagine her as you will from that description; I will not attempt to describe her more closely. For her voice—you have heard Mdlle. Gerster?" (I bowed assent)—"well, it was a voice of that quality, and the method was not unlike. I, looking back, still think that, with all technical faults of a beginner, the freshness and charm of that representation have never been surpassed; but by this time you have guessed that I fell madly in love with the Fräulein at first

sight and hearing, and therefore I am still, with that memory yet clinging to me, what you call a prejudiced witness."

Von Carus leaned back again, and seemed to give himself up for a few moments to recollection before he resumed his story.

"The impression she made upon me was, more or less, that which she produced upon the whole audience—an instructed and critical audience enough, though, as I tell you, it was not the kind of theatre where the traveling *impresario* of past times was likely to be on the lookout for a prodigy. But the sweetness and force of the voice; the spontaneity, as it seemed, in singing and acting; the modesty, both individual and artistic, which tempered all the fire of the performance; these things made Della Mandola a favorite at once, and led to her taking an engagement of several weeks. Every time she sang, which was about twice a week, the house was full; every time she made herself more and more admired and beloved; and every time I, wretched fiddler that I was, fell more in love with her, with a love that I never declared, that I have never even spoken of till now. What would that have profited me to speak of it? She was immeasurably out of my reach, I knew; and she was that two years or so older than myself that made it natural for her to treat me as a boy, to whom it was a careless kindness to give a pleasant smile, and a pleasant word when occasion offered. Besides—and, believe me,

here, that I was not ever jealous of this with a lover's jealousy—very soon she and our tenor for the season found out each other's good qualities, and were understood by all of us in the theatre to be betrothed. It would have been a pretty match; he was half German, half Italian, and had then, at least, from his German father, some solid qualities of wisdom and judgment, which should have been valuable in their *ménage.* Ah!"

He stopped again, and I was beginning to ask a question, which he answered before I had completed it in words.

"No, *lieber Freund,*" he said; "that was not to be. They parted at the end of the season, full of love and trust in each other. Each was going to fulfill another promising engagement, and each looked forward to their meeting on the great lyric stages of Europe to share triumphs deserved by talent and hard work, and to match their triumphs by those of a happy marriage. They were to correspond constantly, and there was to be no black spot in their happy life. So she went to Italy; and then her dreams of extravagant success came true. She was adored wherever she went, and the London engagement came far sooner than she had expected it. He —it is a story so simple and so tragic, I can tell you it in four words, and you will know what is coming—he lost his voice."

Taken with what had gone before, and especially

with certain intonations and gestures of Von, as he had spoken, the words were tragic enough, and I guessed from them part, though not all of the sequel, which he proceeded to tell me with the rapid utterance of a man who wishes to get quickly through a painful task. His emotion caused him at times to speak in his native German, but I give his words in English throughout. "I heard of this misfortune, and I heard that when he broke the news to her, he received a letter from her full of encouragement and love, which made up as much as anything could for his grief and disappointment. Then I, too, went about to seek a better fortune as a violinist, and in my little way as a composer, and save for news, now and again, of the Della Mandola's continued success, I saw and heard nothing more of them directly, until I found myself playing a violin in the orchestra of the old Her Majesty's Theatre, that delightful theatre with the amber hangings. She had sung one or two parts, in which she had completely captivated the English public, and she had met me once or twice in and out of the theatre, and had had her gracious smile and her kind words of old for me, with the same innocent caressing manner that I remembered so well. I had been told that of late she had put this manner and its charms to no very noble uses, and though the man who told me so was my bosom friend, it went near to being an ill thing either for him or for me that he had said it.

"Well, let me get on. She was to appear for the

first time before an English public as Valentine in the 'Huguenots.' There were as many rehearsals as could be managed, and I, who had never seen or heard her in this great part, took, of course, a great and special interest in it. One day I met her after rehearsal, and in the middle of paying her compliments and offering her at her own request a hint here and there, I suddenly asked her for news of Eugen—that was the first name of the tenor of the old days. I could not guess at the moment what impulse prompted me to do this, any more than I could tell why I had never asked after him in our former meetings. She started, and in her face it was as if first a storm of lightning and then a sudden weeping of rain had come. I do not mean that she wept, but that there was the rapid change from a sudden fury to a grief and sadness as sudden. Then she drew herself up with the dignity that made her slight form so majestic on the stage at great moments of passion, and saying coldly that she could give me no news upon this subject, she went to her carriage, and left me feeling humiliated. Five minutes afterward I knew why I had asked her the question.

"As the strange-looking crowd of chorus singers straggled out of the stage entrance, my eye was caught by one figure that I had noticed vaguely at rehearsal, not knowing why I noticed it at all. I knew now. It was Eugen. I did not know whether I should do well to speak to him or not, but he solved the question for me.

He recognized me, and came up to me with a hint in his gait of the old grace and dash that had made people speak of him as the one tenor who might, perhaps, take the place of the King of all the Tenors. 'What a Raoul,' I thought to myself, 'for her Valentine, if only his voice had lasted!' 'Herr Von Carus,' he said, as he came close to me, 'you, I know, are not one to turn your back on an old friend because his fortunes are fallen.' I pressed his hand; it was hot and trembling, his face was pale, and there was a strange look in his eyes. I said to him all the things that old friendship could suggest, avoiding only one subject, and I persuaded him to come to breakfast with me at once, feeling pretty sure that he needed physical as well as mental solace. During the breakfast he resumed, but with an exaggeration that could not but strike me, his old gayety of manner, and told me, with a humor that had something biting in it, various adventures he had had since he had lost his voice, and with it his hopes. As we smoked after breakfast he suddenly became taciturn, and the sparkle in his eyes gave place to the same fierce, heavy look that had surprised me before. Suddenly he got up, said to me, 'I have written to her,' and went his way. That was the only reference to her that passed between us, and its effect upon me was indescribably painful. The next night but one was that of her first appearance as Valentine, and in the intervening day I had no opportunity of speaking either to her or to him; indeed, he

seemed to avoid me. On the afternoon before her appearance I fell in with him; he looked paler, thinner, more desperate than before. This time, again, he sought me of his own accord, and said in a tone which appeared to me terribly quiet, 'It will be a triumph, an effect that will never be forgotten,' and again he disappeared swiftly without giving me the chance of a reply. I confess to you that I shuddered without knowing why, and was ashamed of myself for doing so.

"Well, it was a great triumph. As scene followed scene the Diva gained greater and greater feeling of her part, greater and greater hold upon her audience. Among the musicians between the acts there was but one opinion, that this was the finest Valentine that the stage had seen for years. In the excitement I clean forgot Eugen.

"Then came that last scene. Sponzini, of whom you spoke just now, then in the fullness of his youth and power, delivered the prayer like one inspired, and she, with voice, action, and expression, shared the exaltation that triumphs over impending death. San Bris came on at the head of his detachment of King's troops and gave the fatal order, 'Del Re in nome, Fuoco!' It was not seen at first, it was not seen till the fall of the curtain what had happened. *Mein Lieber*, she was shot through the heart, and among those of the King's troops also was one who was dead."

There was a pause.

"No," continued Von Carus, answering my unasked question, "the shot was always attributed to accident, and for him (for Eugen) there was no doubt he had heart disease. For the man who was at the time supposed to be in close relations with her, what matters it to speak? But you do not wonder that I have strange and painful notions of the last act of the 'Huguenots.'"

"What a situation!" exclaimed the Eminent Tragedian and the Critic simultaneously, as the musical voice of the narrator ceased.

"'The action to the word,' indeed," added the former.

"Poor thing!" said *Beatrice* tenderly, in a low voice; "to have let a thoughtless love come into her life, and then to expiate it by dying with the words of a sham one on her lips. What a sad story!" And she rose and gathered her wraps together and went below, all the men assisting her to the head of the gangway.

The following evening was starless but serene. A veil spread over the upper sky, but along the horizon lay banked-up clouds, behind which summer lightnings played from time to time, throwing them out into weird and spectral relief. The sea heaved in long, lazy pulsations, and the waves were picked out with gold by the lines of lambent phosphorescence along their drifting summits. The wind was just sufficient to steady the ship, making her lie over so little that she seemed almost to ride on an even keel. There was a sense of languor over everything, which would have been delightful had it not meant a beggarly account of knots in the twenty-four hours' run.

Our party assembled after dinner in the lee of the smoking-room, through the windows of which sufficient light streamed forth to make figures recognizable, though it left features in the vague.

"The Critic's story," cried the Novelist. "Now," he added,

turning to the Romancer, "Providence hath delivered our enemy into our hands. We are to have the satisfaction for which Job longed in vain. Our Critic has written a book, or at least has concocted a story."

"Not at all!" replied the Critic; "no concoction in the matter. It is an adventure which befell an acquaintance of mine, and I read it from his manuscript. He sent it me for my opinion, and I promised to try and 'place' it in America. I am curious to see how it strikes you."

"*Fiat experimentum*—in short," said the Romancer.

"I did not put it in that way," returned the Critic; and rising so as to let the lamp-light fall on the bundle of manuscript in his hand, he read as follows:

MY FASCINATING FRIEND.

By WILLIAM ARCHER.

I.

Nature has cursed me with a retiring disposition. I have gone round the world without making a single friend by the way. Coming out of my own shell is as difficult to me as drawing others out of theirs. There are some men who go through life extracting the substance of every one they meet, as one picks out periwinkles with a pin. To me my fellow-men are oysters, and I have no oyster-knife; my sole consolation (if it be one) is that my own valves absolutely defy the oyster-knives of others. Not more than twice or thrice in my life have I met a fellow-creature at whose "Open Sesame" the treasures of my heart and brain stood instantly revealed. My Fascinating Friend was one of these rare and sympathetic beings.

I was lounging away a few days at Monaco, awaiting a summons to join some relations in Italy. One afternoon I had started for an aimless and rambling climb among the olive-terraces on the lower slopes of the Tête du Chien. Finding an exquisite coign of

vantage amid the roots of a gnarled old trunk springing from a built-up semicircular patch of level ground, I sat me down to rest, and read, and dream. Below me, a little to the right, Monaco jutted out into the purple sea. I could distinguish carriages and pedestrians coming and going on the chaussée between the promontory and Monte Carlo, but I was far too high for any sound to reach me. Away to the left the coast took a magnificent sweep, past the clustering houses of Roccabruna, past the mountains at whose base Mentone nestled unseen, past the Italian frontier, past the bight of Ventimiglia, to where the Capo di Bordighera stood faintly outlined between sea and sky. There was not a solitary sail on the whole expanse of the Mediterranean. A line of white, curving at rhythmic intervals along a small patch of sandy beach, showed that there was a gentle swell upon the sea, but its surface was mirror-like. A lovelier scene there is not in the world, and it was at its very loveliest. I took the "Saturday Review" from my pocket, and was soon immersed in an article on the commutation of tithes.

I was aroused from my absorption by the rattle of a small stone hopping down the steep track, half path, half stairway, by which I had ascended. It had been loosened by the foot of a descending wayfarer, in whom, as he picked his way slowly downward, I recognized a middle-aged German (that I supposed to be his nationality) who had been very assiduous at the roulette-tables of the

Casino for some days past. There was nothing remarkable in his appearance, his spectacled eyes, squat nose, and square-cropped bristling beard being simply characteristic of his class and country. He did not notice me as he went by, being too intent on his footing to look about him; but I was so placed that it was a minute or more before he passed out of sight round a bend in the path. He was just turning the corner, and my eyes were still fixed on him, when I was conscious of another figure within my field of vision. This second comer had descended the same pathway, but had loosened no stones on his passage. He trod with such exquisite lightness and agility that he had passed close by me without my being aware of his presence, while he, for his part, had his eyes fixed with a curious intensity on the thick-set figure of the German, upon whom, at his rate of progress, he must have been gaining rapidly. A glance showed me that he was a young man of slender figure, dressed in a suit of dark-colored tweed, of English cut, and wearing a light-brown wide-awake hat. Just as my eye fell upon him he put his hand into the inner breast-pocket of his coat, and drew from it something which, as he was now well past me, I could not see. At the same moment some small object, probably jerked out of his pocket by mistake, fell almost noiselessly on the path at his feet. In his apparently eager haste he did not notice his loss, but was gliding onward, leaving what I took to be his purse lying on the path. It was clearly my duty

to call his attention to it; so I said, "Hi!" an interjection which I have found serves its purpose in all countries. He gave a perceptible start, and looked round at me over his shoulder. I pointed to the object he had dropped, and said, "*Voilà!*" He had thrust back into his pocket the thing, whatever it was, which he held in his hand, and now turned round to look where I was pointing. "Ah!" he said in English, "my cigarette-case! I am much obliged to you," and he stooped and picked it up.

"I thought it was your purse," I said.

"I would rather have lost my purse than this," he said, with a light laugh. He had apparently abandoned his intention of overtaking the German, who had meanwhile passed out of sight.

"Are you such an enthusiastic smoker?" I asked.

"I go in for quality, not quantity," he replied; "and a Spanish friend has just given me some incomparable *cigarritos*." He opened the case as he ascended the few steps which brought him up to my little plateau. "Have one?" he said, holding it out to me with the most winning smile I have ever seen on any human face.

I was about to take one from the left-hand side of the case, when he turned it away and presented the other side to me.

"No, no!" he said; "these flat ones are my common brand. The round ones are the gems."

"I am robbing you," I said, as I took one.

"Not if you are smoker enough to appreciate it," he said, as he stretched himself on the ground beside me, and produced from a little gold match-box a wax vesta, with which he lighted my cigarette and his own.

So graceful was his whole personality, so easy and charming his manner, that it did not strike me as in the least odd that he should thus make friends with me by the mere exchange of half a dozen words. I looked at him as he lay resting on his elbows and smoking lazily. He had thrown his hat off, and his wavy hair, longish and of an opaque charcoal black, fell over his temples while he shook it back behind his ears. He was a little above the middle height, of dark complexion, with large and soft black eyes and arched eyebrows, a small and rather broad nose (the worst feature in his face), full, curving and sensitive lips, and a very strong and rounded chin. He was absolutely beardless, but a slight black down on the upper lip announced a coming mustache. His age could not have been more than twenty. The cut of his clothes, as I have said, was English, but his large black satin neckcloth, flowing out over the collar of his coat, was such as no home-keeping Englishman would ever have dared to appear in. This detail, combined with his accent, perfectly pure but a trifle precise and deliberate, led me to take him for an Englishman brought up on the Continent—probably in Italy, for there was no French intonation in his speech. His voice was rich, but not deep—a light baritone.

He took up my "Saturday Review."

"The Bible of the Englishman abroad," he said. "One of the institutions that make me proud of our country."

"I have it sent me every week," I said.

"So had my father," he replied. "He used to say, 'Shakespeare we share with the Americans, but, damn it, the "Saturday Review" is all our own!' He was one of the old school, my father."

"And the good school," I said, with enthusiasm. "So am I."

"Now, I'm a bit of a Radical," my new friend rejoined, looking up with a smile, which made the confession charming rather than objectionable; and from this point we started upon a discussion, every word of which I could write down if I chose, such a lasting impression did it make upon me. He was indeed a brilliant talker, having read much and traveled enormously for one so young. "I think I have lived in every country in Europe," he said, "except Russia. Somehow it has never interested me." I found that he was a Cambridge man, or, at least, was intimately acquainted with Cambridge life and thought; and this was another bond between us. His Radicalism was not very formidable; it amounted to little more, indeed, than a turn for humorous paradox. Our discussion reminded me of Fuller's description of the wit-combats between Ben Johnson and Shakespeare at the "Mermaid." I was the Spanish galleon, my Fas-

cinating Friend was the English man-of-war, ready "to take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention." An hour sped away delightfully, the only thing I did not greatly enjoy being the cigarette, which seemed to me no better than many I had smoked before.

"What do you think of my cigarettes?" he said, as I threw away the stump.

I felt that a blunt expression of opinion would be in bad taste after his generosity in offering an utter stranger the best he had. "Exquisite!" I answered.

"I thought you would say so," he replied, gravely. "Have another!"

"Let me try one of your common ones," I said.

"No, you shan't!" he replied, closing the case with a sudden snap, which endangered my fingers, but softening the *brusquerie* of the proceeding by one of his enthralling smiles; then he added, using one of the odd idioms which gave his speech a peculiar piquancy, "I don't palm off upon my friends what I have of second best." He re-opened the case and held it out to me. To have refused would have been to confess that I did not appreciate his "gems," as he called them. I smoked another, in which I still failed to find any unusual fragrance; but the aroma of my new-found friend's whole personality was so keen and subtle, that it may have deadened my nerves to any more material sensation.

We lay talking until the pink flush of evening spread

along the horizon, and in it Corsica, invisible before, seemed to body itself forth from nothingness like an island of phantom peaks and headlands. Then we rose, and, in the quickly gathering dusk, took our way down among the olive-yards and through the orange-gardens to Monte Carlo.

II.

My acquaintance with my Fascinating Friend lasted little more than forty-eight hours, but during that time we were inseparable. He was not at my hotel, but on that first evening I persuaded him to dine with me, and soon after breakfast on the following morning I went in search of him; I was at the Russie, he at the Hôtel de Paris. I found him smoking in the veranda, and at a table not far distant sat the German of the previous afternoon, finishing a tolerably copious *déjeûner à la fourchette.* As soon as he had scraped his plate quite clean and finished the last dregs of his bottle of wine, he rose and took his way to the Casino. After a few minutes' talk with my Fascinating Friend, I suggested a stroll over to Monaco. He agreed, and we spent the whole day together, loitering and lounging, talking and dreaming. We went to the Casino in the afternoon to hear the concert, and I discovered my friend to be a cultivated musician. Then we strolled into the gambling-room for an hour, but neither of us played. The German was busy at one of the roulette-tables, and seemed

to be winning considerably. That evening I dined with my friend at the *table d'hôte* of his hotel. At the other end of the table I could see the German sitting silent and unnoticing, rapt in the joys of deglutition.

Next morning, by arrangement, my friend called upon me at my hotel, and over one of his cigarettes, to which I was getting accustomed, we discussed our plan for the day. I suggested a wider flight than yesterday's. Had he ever been to Eza, the old Saracen robber-nest perched on a rock a thousand feet above the sea, halfway between Monaco and Villafranca? No, he had not been there, and after some consideration he agreed to accompany me. We went by rail to the little station on the sea-shore, and then attacked the arduous ascent. The day was perfect, though rather too warm for climbing, and we had frequent rests among the olive-trees, with delightfully discursive talks on all things under the sun. My companion's charm grew upon me moment by moment. There was in his manner a sort of refined coquetry of amiability which I found irresistible. It was combined with a frankness of sympathy and interest subtly flattering to a man of my unsocial habit of mind. I was conscious every now and then that he was drawing me out; but to be drawn out so gently and genially was, to me, a novel and delightful experience. It produced in me one of those effusions of communicativeness to which, I am told, all reticent people are occasionally subject. I have myself given way to them some three or

four times in my life, and found myself pouring forth to perfect strangers such intimate details of feeling and experience as I would rather die than impart to my dearest friend. Three or four times, I say, have I found myself suddenly and inexplicably brought within the influence of some invisible truth-compelling talisman, which drew from me confessions the rack could not have extorted; but never has the influence been so irresistible as in the case of my Fascinating Friend. I told him what I had told to no other human soul—what I had told to the lonely glacier, to the lurid storm-cloud, to the seething sea, but had never breathed in mortal ear—I told him the tragedy of my life. How well I remember the scene! We were resting beneath the chestnut-trees that shadow a stretch of level sward immediately below the last short stage of ascent that leads into the heart of the squalid village now nestling in the crevices of the old Moslem fastness. The midday hush was on sea and sky. Far out on the horizon a level line of smoke showed where an unseen steamer was crawling along under the edge of the sapphire sphere. As I reached the climax of my tale an old woman, bent almost double beneath a huge fagot of firewood, passed us on her way to the village. I remember that it crossed my mind to wonder whether there was any capacity in the nature of such as she for suffering at all comparable to that which I was describing. My companion's sympathy was subtle and soothing. There was in my tale an element of the grotesque which

might have tempted a vulgar nature to flippancy. No smile crossed my companion's lips. He turned away his head, on pretense of watching the receding figure of the old peasant-woman. When he looked at me again, his deep dark eyes were suffused with a moisture which enhanced the mystery of their tenderness. In that moment I felt, as I had never felt before, what it is to find a friend.

We returned to Monte Carlo late in the afternoon, and I found a telegram at my hotel begging me to be in Genoa the following morning. I had barely time to bundle my traps together and swallow a hasty meal before my train was due. I scrawled a note to my new-found confidant, expressing most sincerely my sorrow at parting from him so soon and so suddenly, and my hope that ere long we should meet again.

III.

The train was already at the platform when I reached the station. There were one or two first-class through carriages on it, which, for a French railway, were unusually empty. In one of them I saw at the window the head of the German, and, from a certain subdued radiance in his expression, I judged that he must be carrying off a considerable "pile" from the gaming-table. His personality was not of the most attractive, and there was something in his squat nose suggestive of stertorous possibilities which, under ordinary circumstances, would

have held me aloof from him. But—shall I confess it? —he had for me a certain sentimental attraction, because he was associated in my mind with that first meeting with my forty-eight-hours' friend. I looked into his compartment; an overcoat and valise lay in the opposite corner from his, showing that seat to be engaged, but two corners were still left me to choose from. I installed myself in one of them, face to face with the valise and overcoat, and awaited the signal to start. The cry of "En voiture, messieurs!" soon came, and a lithe figure sprang into the carriage. It was my Fascinating Friend! For a single moment I thought that a flash of annoyance crossed his features on finding me there, but the impression vanished at once, for his greeting was as full of cordiality as of surprise. We soon exchanged explanations. He, like myself, had been called away by telegram, not to Genoa, but to Rome; he, like myself, had left a note expressing his heartfelt regret at our sudden separation. As we sped along, skirting bays that shone burnished in the evening light, and rumbling every now and then through a tunnel-pierced promontory, we resumed the almost affectionate converse interrupted only an hour before, and I found him a more delightful companion than ever. His exquisitely playful fantasy seemed to be acting at high pressure, as in the case of a man who is talking to pass the time under the stimulus of a delightful anticipation. I suspected that he was hurrying to some peculiarly agreeable rendezvous

in Rome, and I hinted my suspicion, which he laughed off in such a way as to confirm it. The German, in the mean time, sat stolid and unmoved, making some penciled calculations in a little pocket-book. He clearly did not understand English.

As we approached Ventimiglia my friend rose, took down his valise from the rack, and, turning his back to me, made some changes in its arrangement, which I, of course, did not see. He then locked it carefully and kept it beside him. At Ventimiglia we had all to turn out to undergo the inspection of the Italian *dogana*. My friend's valise was his sole luggage, and I noticed, rather to my surprise, that he gave the custom-house official a very large bribe—two or three gold pieces—to make his inspection of it purely nominal, and forego the opening of either of the inside compartments. The German, on the other hand, had a small portmanteau and a large dispatch-box, both of which he opened with a certain ostentation, and I observed that the official's eyes glittered under his raised eyebrows as he looked into the contents of the dispatch-box. On returning to the train we all three resumed our old places, and the German drew the shade of a sleeping-cap over his eyes and settled himself down for the night. It was now quite dark, but the moon was shining.

"Have you a large supply of the 'gems' in your valise?" I asked, smiling, curious to know his reason for a subterfuge which accorded ill with his ordinary straight-

forwardness, and remembering that tobacco is absolutely prohibited at the Italian frontier.

"Unfortunately, no," he said; "my 'gems' are all gone, and I have only my common cigarettes remaining. Will you try them, such as they are?" and he held out his case, both sides of which were now filled with the flat cigarettes. We each took one and lighted it, but he began giving me an account of a meeting he had had with Lord Beaconsfield, which he detailed so fully and with so much enthusiasm that, after a whiff or two he allowed his cigarette to go out. I could not understand his taste in tobacco. These cigarettes which he despised seemed to me at once more delicate and more peculiar than the others. They had a flavor which was quite unknown to me. I was much interested in his vivid account of the personality of that great man, whom I admired then, while he was yet with us, and whom, as a knight of the Primrose League, I now revere; but our climb of the morning, and the scrambling departure of the afternoon, were beginning to tell on me, and I became irresistibly drowsy. Gradually, and in spite of myself, my eyes closed. I could still hear my companion's voice mingling with the heavy breathing of the German, who had been asleep for some time; but soon even these sounds ceased to penetrate the mist of languor, the end of my cigarette dropped from between my fingers, and I knew no more.

. . . . . .

My awakening was slow and spasmodic. There was a clearly perceptible interval—probably several minutes—between the first stirrings of consciousness and the full clarification of my faculties. I began to be aware of the rumble and oscillation of the train without realizing what was meant. Then I opened my eyes and blinked at the lamp, and vaguely noted the yellow oil washing to and fro in the bowl. Then the white square of the "Avis aux Voyageurs" caught my eye in the gloom under the luggage-rack, and beneath it, on the seat, I saw the light reflected from the lock of the German's portmanteau. Next I was conscious of the German himself still sleeping in his corner, but no longer puffing and grunting as when I had fallen asleep. Then I raised my head, looked round the carriage, and the next moment sprang bolt upright in dismay.

Where was my Fascinating Friend?

Gone! vanished! There was not a trace of him. His valise, his great-coat, all had disappeared. Only in the little cigar-ash box on the window-frame I saw the flat cigarette which he had barely lighted—how long before? I looked at my watch: it must have been about an hour and a half ago.

By this time I had all my faculties about me. I looked across at the German, intending to ask him if he knew anything of our late traveling-companion. Then I noticed that his head had fallen forward in such a way that it seemed to me suffocation must be imminent. I

approached him, and put down my head to look into his face. As I did so I saw a roundish black object on the oil-cloth floor not far from the toe of his boot. The lamp-light was reflected at a single point from its convex surface. I put down my hand and touched it. It was liquid. I looked at my fingers—they were not black, but red. I think (but am not sure) that I screamed aloud. I shrank to the other end of the carriage, and it was some moments before I had sufficient presence of mind to look for a means of communicating with the guard. Of course there was none. I was alone for an indefinite time with a dead man. But was he dead? I had little doubt, from the way his head hung, that his throat was cut, and a horrible fascination drew me to his side to examine. No; there was no sign of the hideous fissure I expected to find beneath the gray bristles of his beard. His head fell forward again into the same position, and I saw with horror that I had left two bloody finger-marks upon the grey shade of his sleeping-cap. Then I noticed for the first time that the window he was facing stood open, for a gust of wind came through it and blew back the lappel of his coat. What was that on his waistcoat? I tore the coat back and examined: it was a small triangular hole just over the heart, and round it there was a dark circle about the size of a shilling, where the blood had soaked through the light material. In examining it I did what the murderer had not done—disturbed the equilibrium of the body, which fell over against me.

At that moment I heard a loud voice behind me, coming from I knew not where. I nearly fainted with terror. The train was still going at full speed; the compartment was empty, save for myself and the ghastly object which lay in my arms; and yet I seemed to hear a voice almost at my ear. There it was again! I summoned up courage to look round. It was the guard of the train clinging on outside the window and demanding "Biglietti!" By this time he, too, saw that something was amiss. He opened the door and swung himself into the carriage. "Dio mio!" I heard him exclaim, as I actually flung myself into his arms and pointed to the body now lying in a huddled heap amid its own blood on the floor. Then, for the first time in my life, I positively swooned away, and knew no more.

When I came to myself the train had stopped at a small station, the name of which I do not know to this day. There was a Babel of speech going on around, not one word of which I could understand. I was on the platform, supported between two men in uniform, with cocked hats and cockades. In vain I tried to tell my story. I knew little or no Italian, and, though there were one or two Frenchmen in the train, they were useless as interpreters, for on the one hand my power of speaking French seemed to have departed in my agitation, and on the other hand none of the Italians understood it. In vain I tried to make them understand that a "giovane" had traveled in the compartment with us

who had now disappeared. The Italian guard, who had come on at Ventimiglia, evidently had no recollection of him. He merely shook his head, said "Non capisco," and inquired if I was "Prussiano." The train had already been delayed some time, and, after a consultation between the station-master, the guard, and the syndic of the village, who had been summoned in haste, it was determined to hand the matter over to the authorities at Genoa. The two carabinieri sat one on each side of me facing the engine, and on the opposite seat the body was stretched out with a luggage tarpaulin over it. In this hideous fashion I passed the four or five remaining hours of the journey to Genoa.

The next week I spent in an Italian prison, a very uncomfortable yet quite unromantic place of abode. Fortunately, my friends were by this time in Genoa, and they succeeded in obtaining some slight mitigation of my discomforts. At the end of that time I was released, there being no evidence against me. The testimony of the French guard, of the booking-clerk at Monaco, and of the staff of the Hôtel de Paris, established the existence of my Fascinating Friend, which was at first called in question; but no trace could be found of him. With him had disappeared his victim's dispatch-box, in which were stored the proceeds of several days of successful gambling. Robbery, however, did not seem to have been the primary motive of the crime, for his watch, purse, and the heavy jewelry about his person were all

untouched. From the German Consul at Genoa I learned privately, after my release, that the murdered man, though in fact a Prussian, had lived long in Russia, and was suspected of having had an unofficial connection with the St. Petersburg police. It was thought, indeed, that the capital with which he had commenced his operation at Monte Carlo was the reward of some special act of treachery; so that the anarchists, if it was indeed they who struck the blow, had merely suffered Judas to put his thirty pieces out to usance, in order to pay back to their enemies with interest the blood-money of their friends.

IV.

About two years later I happened one day to make an afternoon call in Mayfair, at the house of a lady well known in the social and political world, who honors me, if I may say so, with her friendship. Her drawing-room was crowded, and the cheerful ring of afternoon tea-cups was audible through the pleasant medley of women's voices. I joined a group around the hostess, where an animated discussion was in progress on the Irish Coercion Bill, then the leading political topic of the day. The argument interested me deeply; but it is one of my mental peculiarities that when several conversations are going on around me I can by no means keep my attention exclusively fixed upon the one in which I am myself engaged. Odds and ends from all the others find their way

into my ears and my consciousness, and I am sometimes accused of absence of mind, when my fault is in reality a too great alertness of the sense of hearing. In this instance the conversation of three or four groups was more or less audible to me; but it was not long before my attention was absorbed by the voice of a lady, seated at the other side of the circular ottoman on which I myself had taken my place.

She was talking merrily, and her hearers, in one of whom, as I glanced over my shoulder, I recognized an ex-Cabinet Minister, seemed to be greatly entertained. As her back was toward me, all I could see of the lady herself was her short black hair falling over the handsome fur collar of her mantle.

"He was so tragic about it," she was saying, "that it was really *impayable*. The lady was beautiful, wealthy, accomplished, and I don't know what else. The rival was an Australian squatter, with a beard as thick as his native bush. My communicative friend—I scarcely knew even his name when he poured forth his woes to me—thought that he had an advantage in his light mustache, with a military twirl in it. They were all three traveling in Switzerland, but the Australian had gone off to make the ascent of some peak or other, leaving the field to the foe for a couple of days at least. On the first day the foe made the most of his time, and had nearly brought matters to a crisis. The next morning he got himself up as exquisitely as possible, in order to clinch

his conquest, but found to his disgust that he had left his dressing-case with his razors at the last stopping-place. There was nothing for it but to try the village barber, who was also the village stationer, and draper, and ironmonger, and chemist—a sort of Alpine Whiteley, in fact. His face had just been soaped—what do you call it?—lathered, is it not? and the barber had actually taken hold of his nose so as to get his head into the right position, when, in the mirror opposite, he saw the door open, and—oh, horror!—who should walk into the shop but the fair one herself! He gave such a start that the barber gashed his chin. His eyes met hers in the mirror; for a moment he saw her lips quiver and tremble, and then she burst into shrieks of uncontrollable laughter, and rushed out of the shop. If you knew the pompous little man, I am sure you would sympathize with her. I know I did when he told me the story. His heart sank within him, but he acted like a Briton. He determined to take no notice of the *contretemps*, but return boldly to the attack. She received him demurely at first, but the moment she raised her eyes to his face, and saw the patch of sticking-plaster on his chin, she was again seized with such convulsions that she had to rush from the room. 'She is now in Melbourne,' he said, almost with a sob, 'and I assure you, my dear friend, that I never now touch a razor without an impulse, to which I expect I shall one day succumb, to put it to a desperate use.'"

There was a singing in my ears, and my brain was

whirling. This story, heartlessly and irreverently told, was the tragedy of my life!

I had breathed it to no human soul—*save one!*

I rose from my seat, wondering within myself whether my agitation was visible to those around me, and went over to the other side of the room whence I could obtain a view of the speaker. There were the deep, dark eyes, there were the full, sensuous lips, the upper shaded with an impalpable down, there was the charcoal-black hair! I knew too well that rich contralto voice! It was my Fascinating Friend!

Before I had fully realized the situation she rose, handed her empty tea-cup to the Cabinet-Minister, bowed to him and his companion, and made her way up to the hostess, evidently intending to take her leave. As she turned away, after shaking hands cordially with Lady X——, her eyes met mine intently fixed upon her. She did not start, she neither flushed nor turned pale; she simply raised for an instant her finely-arched eyebrows, and as her tall figure sailed past me out of the room, she turned upon me the same exquisite and irresistible smile with which my Fascinating Friend had offered me his cigarette-case that evening among the olive-trees.

I hurried up to Lady X——.

"Who is the lady who has just left the room?" I asked.

"Oh, that is the Baroness M——," she replied.

"She is half an Englishwoman, half a Pole. She was my daughter's bosom friend at Girton—a most interesting girl."

"Is she a politician?" I asked.

"No; that's the one thing I don't like about her. She is not a bit of a patriot; she makes a joke of her country's wrongs and sufferings. Should you like to meet her? Dine with us the day after to-morrow. She is to be here."

. . . . . .

I dined at Lady X——'s on the appointed day, but the Baroness was not there. Urgent family affairs had called her suddenly to Poland.

A week later the assassination of the Czar sent a thrill of horror through the civilized world.

"Don't you think your friend might be held an accessory after the fact to the death of the German?" asked the Novelist, when all the flattering comments, which were many, were at an end. "And an accessory before the fact to the assassination of the Czar?" chimed in the Editor. "Why didn't he go straight from Lady ——'s house to the nearest police-station and put the police on the track of his 'Fascinating Friend'?" "What a question!" the Romancer exclaimed, starting from his seat and pacing restlessly about the deck. "How could any man with a palate for the rarest flavors of life resist the temptation of taking that woman down to dinner? And, besides, hadn't he eaten salt with her? Hadn't he smoked the social cigarette with her? Shade of De Quincey! are we to treat like a vulgar criminal a mistress of the finest of the fine arts? Shall we be such crawling creatures as to

seek to lay by the heels a Muse of Murder? Are we a generation of detectives, that we should do this thing?" "So my friend put it to me," said the Critic dryly, "not quite so eloquently, but to that effect. Between ourselves, though, I believe he was influenced more by considerations of his personal safety than by admiration for murder as a fine art. He remembered the fate of the German, and was unwilling to share it." "He adopted a policy of non-intervention," said the Eminent Tragedian, who in his hours of leisure, was something of a politician. "I should rather say of *laissez faire*, or, more precisely, of *laissez assassiner*," laughed the Editor. "What was the Fascinating Friend supposed to have in her portmanteau?" asked *Beatrice*. "What was she so anxious to conceal from the custom-house officers?" "Her woman's clothes, I imagine," the Critic replied, "though I don't hold myself bound to explain all the ins and outs of her proceedings." "Then she *was* a wonderful woman," replied the fair questioner, as one having authority, "if she could get a respectable gown and 'fixings,' as the Americans say, into a small portmanteau. But," she added, "I very soon suspected she was a woman." "Why?" asked several voices simultaneously. "Why, because she drew him out so easily," was the reply. "You think, in fact," said the Romancer, "that however little its victim was aware of it, there was a touch of the *Ewig-weibliche* in her fascination?" "Precisely."

The next day was cold on deck, with a wind and drizzle from the north, but toward evening the party, who now sought each other out and clung together like magnetic particles, gathered slowly round the warm base of the smoke-stack, and each one looked at the other with an inquiring eye. Among them was a quiet man of about thirty-five, with a yellow mustache and goatee, over whose right ear was always hooked the cord of a pair of powerful eyeglasses. For several days past a steady stream of fun had emanated from him, and now he was keeping every one in laughter

by a never-ending series of quaint remarks upon the ship, the passengers, and whatever came within the range of his *pince-nez*. The Eminent Tragedian listened for some time in amused silence, and then whispered a question in the ear of the dark fellow in the yellow ulster, who stood next him. "Yes, indeed," replied the latter promptly; whereupon the Eminent Tragedian turned to the quiet man, and invited him, in the name of the company, to entertain them with whatever fiction he might have in his head. "I have no fiction, unfortunately," replied the man with the eyeglasses, "but if a bit of sober fact of a political-historical nature will please you, I am at your service." The company glanced at him with some anxiety, but his face reassured them, so their invitation had no uncertain ring about it, and the quiet man proceeded forthwith to tell of another like himself.

RILEY, M. P.

By TIGHE HOPKINS.

I.

This is the story of a quiet man, called Riley, who went down to a borough which nobody else had heard of, and told the people that if they would send him to Parliament he would get them three acres and a cow apiece, and see that the country was governed by the light of common sense. They were a slow, pious people, who had had no education to speak of, and, as they had never listened to anything like this before, they asked old Mr. Deemster, who was standing by applauding with both feet, what it meant. He said it was Radicalism, and a good thing, too. He said, besides:

"Now, you all want three acres and a cow, don't you? If there's any man here who doesn't, let him go home."

The electors wagged their chaps like one man, but none of them went home.

"Very well," continued old Mr. Deemster, mounting the barrel so as to emphasize his words, "you all want three acres and a cow, which comes to this, that you've

been Radicals all your lives without knowing it. More shame for you then, I say, to keep on electing that there Sir Supine Lumpkin, who has never promised you anything, and wouldn't give it to you if he did. Now, then, what you've got to do is to act up to your principles and elect this Mr. Riley, whom I've fetched here from never-you-mind-where, and he'll get you three acres and a cow, and something more besides."

The electors felt drawn toward Riley from that moment, and twenty-six of them formed themselves into a committee, as Deemster told them to, and hired a room at the public, and sat round a table with some beer in the middle, and thought it out quietly.

The more they thought it out, the better they liked it, and the less quiet they became; and when the landlord, with a face like beetroot, came in and asked if they meant to go home that night or didn't they, they helped one another to their legs, and hiccupped three Rileys and an acre, and their wives put them to bed with the first broomstick they laid hold of.

I can tell you these were strange goings on for Pullborough, and you would like to know how it came about that the people were deciding to elect Riley, whom none of them had ever seen or heard of till that night, and turn out old Sir Supine Lumpkin, the Squire, who had lived among them all his life, and drawn his money out of the land, and spent it for the good of himself and his family.

This Mr. Deemster was at the bottom of it all, as I dare say you expected he would be, and, as far as that goes, he was generally at the bottom of everything out of which he could make a trifle for himself. He was a large, bald-headed man, but, over and above that, he was a pill-merchant, and had made a lot of money by mixing patent pills on a large scale. I mean, of course, that the business was on a large scale, not the pills; for you could buy them in boxes of all sizes and upward, according to the number you preferred to take at once. The pills were good for one thing or another, so Deemster said; and Deemster was good for a hundred thousand, so the people said. For all this he was a frugal man, and might have been seen in his drawing-room window on fine evenings mending his trousers with a needle and thread, because he had a saying that a stitch in time saved trousers which might otherwise have gone to the bad. He had no more than the average modesty of some others I could name who have made fortunes by hocusing the population, and he held a poor opinion of people who had not got their money out of pills, or some other trade which had obliged them at one time to stand behind a counter with their sleeves rolled up, and tell customers that the smallest orders were attended to as carefully as the largest.

Now, old Sir Supine had never made any money at all, but had had it made for him by his ancestors; so you can suppose Deemster had a very poor opinion of

him. In fact, Deemster would not have cared if Sir Supine had been expropriated, and his lands made over to him, so that he could have built pill-factories all over the estate. As for Sir Supine, he despised Deemster, because he had once taken a box of his pills before bed-time, and refused to pay for them, on the ground that they did him no good. He lived in some style at the Hall with his housekeeper and his son Augustus; and people who owed him rent went round by the back-door, and thought themselves lucky if they did not leave some part of their clothes with the dog.

In the good old days, when men tippled more and the Church was in no danger, Pullborough returned four members to Parliament; and Sir Supine used to send down on the morning of the election the names of the persons to be elected. The votes of the electors were divided evenly between these gentlemen, or they would have been if most of them had not plumped for Sir Supine, to show that they knew on which side their bread was buttered.

The feud between Deemster and Sir Supine, on account of the pills, was of long standing, but it had lately been embittered by the Squire's refusal to sell Deemster three roods of bog-land, which he wanted to reclaim for the purposes of a vegetable garden. Deemster accordingly began to think the time had come when Pullborough needed a more generous representative in Parliament, and casting about for a likely candidate, he

heard of Riley, a quiet man, who wanted to get into Parliament that he might mingle with patriots, and use the privileges of a legislator to escape payment of his debts. So he invited Riley to contest Pullborough in the Radical interest, and Riley, who never declined an invitation, came and contested it.

He went twice to chapel on Sundays, and Deemster put something in the plate for him, and on week-days he visited the electors in their cottages, and knocked his head against the wet clothes hanging from the ceiling, and said he didn't mind it. Conduct like this was certain to impress a simple borough like Pullborough, and the electors said Riley was just the man they wanted; they wondered they had never thought of him before. His cause was indirectly furthered by the indiscreet conduct of Sir Supine's son Augustus, who carried on as if he had only a nominal respect for his own and his family's name. In Pullborough they had a very well-founded belief in a future place of torment for people who did not attend chapel, and you can understand with what a righteous hatred they would hate a pleasant fellow like Augustus, who always had terriers at his heels, and drove a tandem of donkeys during church hours on Sunday. They wanted Augustus to go to chapel, like the rest of them, for his soul's good; and they thought Sir Supine would send him there if the family-seat in Parliament were threatened. This is why they placarded the town with bills in favor of Riley and the three cows, and gave

the editor of the Radical paper some sherry to write leaders about the necessity of government by common sense.

Sir Supine heard about Riley and his three cows, but took no notice further than to instruct his tenants through the high-minded Tory agent that he thought of doubling the rents at Michaelmas. However, they all of them plumped for Riley, who was elected amid a storm of cheers and rotten eggs. The real truth respecting this election is that, if any earnest politician in Pullborough was sober that night, it was not Riley's fault, for he had said from the first that he would have no bribery, and any one who liked to call for something to drink in his name might do so at every public in the town. There was the necessary amount of slaughter after nightfall, and the principal hatter in the place said the next day to the customers who crowded his shop that he had never known an election so good for trade.

Deemster was very well pleased with himself when the result was made known, and so was Riley, and so were the electors who carried him round the town on a plank, face downward, while the disappointed Tories followed howling, and hit at him with their umbrellas, for it was raining.

But he was just able to call for brandy when he got to his hotel, and he revived when Deemster brought his daughter Dorothy round to congratulate him on his triumph. Don't run away with the notion that Deemster

cared anything about Riley or his triumph, for he didn't; but he was pleased in his large-hearted way to have been one too many for the Squire. Dorothy, however, a pretty and modest girl, not at all like her father, was really in sympathy with the people, and delighted to think they were going to have a farm apiece, and cows and sheep to stock them. And as for Riley, who was going to get them these by his own unaided efforts, she thought him a hero, and told him so in guarded language.

Riley was delighted at this, for he was in love with Dorothy for the sake of her father's extensive business; and when old Deemster had gone out to propose that the electors should chair him, too, he took the girl's hand, and said he had loved her ever since he had observed her frugal ways in the house, and her willingness to help her father more largely than herself; and this was the meaning he had intended to convey in every speech he had made.

"And was this the meaning you intended to convey when you proposed to have government by the light of common sense?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes," answered Riley, "for I think that is the way a man should strive to govern his wife. And I am glad you are such a sensible girl, and willing to be the wife of a man who likes peace and quiet, and who will have a good fortune if your father makes a handsome settlement."

She said if he really meant marriage she would take time to think about it, and he must please not squeeze her hand at present.

He seemed to like her answer, and the same night he returned to his lodgings in K-nn-ngt-n R—d, L-nd-n, S. W., very well satisfied with the turn matters had taken.

Sir Supine accused his son Augustus of having lost him the election, and if you had heard the elder man expostulating with the younger in the drawing-room that evening you would have thought the atmosphere was warm enough without the parlor-maid needing to light so many gas-burners.

II.

Augustus consoled his parent by telling him that, if any justice were still sold, something could certainly be done to a man like Riley for deceiving the population. Sir Supine said that, in a matter like this, money was no object; that Riley must be mended or ended; and that Augustus had better go to town and find out what he could about him, and how much it would cost to have him interfered with. Augustus then went to London with this end in view, and took steps to let the tenants know that he disapproved of their independent conduct.

He laid hands on all stray beasts, and others, and put them in the pound.

He stopped all the paths on his estate.

He inclosed all the commons.

He set up stocks at every turning, and put into them any one found wandering after daybreak.

He sent the rents up fifty per cent.

He gave everybody notice to quit.

He pulled down the sign-post at the cross-roads, and fined short-sighted persons half-a-crown if they could not say which way it ought to be set up again.

He imprisoned poachers in an outhouse, and tortured them every morning in the following diabolical manner:

He had all the magical arts at his fingers' ends, and with the help of the d——l he had constructed an infernal machine like an arm-chair, which, as often as an untruth was uttered in its presence, closed automatically on whomsoever was sitting in it. He fixed the poachers here and read them the speeches of popular politicians, and at every third sentence the machine closed on the victim and squeezed him till he howled again and again.

The people began to see that they had done wrong in sending Riley to Parliament.

Riley meanwhile had joined the other patriots in the House of Commons, and was feeling about like the rest of them for a chance to do something for himself. He made a good start by rising in his place one night and asking the Tory Prime Minister if he had had anything to do with some frauds on a savings-bank. This suc-

ceeded in drawing to him the favorable attention of prominent reformers, one of whom sent him an invitation to dinner. Riley now saw that he was destined to rise, and noting down in his pocket-book all the distinguished Tories who might be insulted with impunity, he reckoned that if he could secure an invitation for each of them he would save his dinner-money for the rest of the session.

Gus was in town now, reading the police reports and going every night to the theatre to find out what he could about Riley. While he was searching in this way, he remembered a friend called Ainger, who lunched at the Athenæum, where they know everything. He went to Ainger, who was sitting in the window with some cutlets and claret before him, and when Ainger saw Gus he put his head through the window and shouted, "Hillo! Come and have some cutlets. How's Riley?" For they had all heard about Riley and his unusual proposals. Gus explained that he hated Riley, and asked Ainger if he knew anything that would put the man in prison. Ainger, who was one of the most superior men in the country, said he had heard Riley spoken of as a serious politician of an independent turn of mind, and just the sort of person to represent a borough like Pullborough, which had never been promised anything before. Of course this was not at all what Gus wanted to hear, so he finished Ainger's claret, and went off in a dudgeon.

"Go to Grainger of the Guards," screamed Ainger, as Gus went down the steps; "he knows everybody."

The difference between the Athenæum and the Guards is, that at the Athenæum they know everything, and in the Guards they know everybody.

Grainger was just taking his horse into the Park, for he was anxious to ride well in case of a war in foreign parts.

"Hulloa!" said Grainger, "what have you done with Riley?" For they had all heard about Riley and his singular proposals. "Confound Riley!" exclaimed Gus. "I want to spoil him. Do you know anything about him?"

Grainger knew everybody, but he did not know Riley, which was just what Gus wanted, for it showed him that Riley could be nobody.

"Go to Rainger in the House," said Grainger. "He's your man. He'll spoil Riley for you."

Gus thereupon took a cab and drove the nearest way to Rainger, who was on his legs in the House, proposing to tax walnuts. As soon as they had rejected his motion, he went round to the Lobby to see Gus.

"Ha!" said Rainger, "there you are. Riley's inside. Come and look at him. I was introduced to him yesterday, and he proposed I should give him a dinner. He's the funniest dog. He has secured a night next week for a motion asking to have government by the light of common sense. Isn't it fun? He says that when he's car-

ried his motion he's going to marry a girl called Dorothy, daughter to a bald-headed man who has made a fortune by selling quack pills. How's your father?"

"Now, who *is* this Riley?" said Gus, when he had strongly stated his reasons for disliking him, the chief being that Riley proposed to marry Dorothy, whom Gus loved for her own sake.

"What!" exclaimed Rainger, "you don't know Riley; though he says you all plumped for him and chaired him on a plank. I'll tell you who he is. Can you speak any foreign language?"

Gus shook his head.

"Well, then, I must tell you in English, but turn your head the other way. Riley . . . ."

Augustus turned pale.

"Impossible!" he said. "How can he be all that in himself?"

"But he is," answered Rainger. "Chairman, committee, members, honorary secretary, and all. And he lives by . . . . nervous politicians who . . . . but are afraid he will tell lies about them . . . . evening n-wsp-p-rs."

"This," said Gus, "is terrible; and you say you have not told me all. Neither have I told all. There is my poor old father," and he went on to draw a painful picture of the brave, high-minded old Squire, rejected by his constituents, and supporting himself on strong language, with scarcely a pleasure left him in life except

the gout. "He has lost his rest," sobbed Gus, "for the only place he could ever sleep quietly in was the House of Commons. And if you come to services to the party," he went on, "why, papa never opened his mouth the whole time he sat here, and voted against every measure brought in by the other side. If he isn't a fit person to represent a constituency like ours, please tell me who is."

"Don't cry," said the kind-hearted Rainger. "Your father shall sit here again within a month from to-day. I have told you that Riley (who is so unprincipled that he would borrow money of the Speaker this very night if he could) has secured a night next week for his motion to overthrow the country. Now, listen to me," and Rainger went on to unfold a plot so dark and dreadful in its details that unless I felt sure you were sitting near some whisky I should not like to repeat it to you. Augustus was a man of unusually strong nerve, but *he trembled from head to foot.*

"We shall want *Her* help, you know," said Rainger, jerking his finger in the direction where Dorothy was sitting in her father's drawing-room, sewing gray petticoats with red bands to them for old women in the town who had put their work-baskets in pawn.

"I am certain she will help," replied Gus, "for she has often told me she would like to do something for the good of the country."

"That will do," said Rainger; "you can leave the rest to me."

Gus went away full of gratitude. He returned home by the night-train, and reached Pullborough the next morning as the milkmen were going out with their cans to the pump.

III.

He had some breakfast at the inn where his principal account was, and the waiter was obsequious. So was the landlord, and so was the girl in the bar, when he went to pay her his respects, and so were the four foolish farmers whom she was serving with new ale. Gus had never known anything like it, for most of these people had been bitten by his dogs at one time or another, and they generally frowned on him.

But persons whom he met as he walked through the town were quite as obsequious, and even stoutish shopmen climbed over their counters to be in time to pull their top-knots when Gus went by. The poor fellow felt quite nervous, and went along swearing in a minor key, thinking they wanted to make game of him.

The truth is, however, there had been a reaction—the people were melancholy, and embarrassed, by reason of the horrible fright the Squire had thrown them into. For he had been making things so hot for them all round that they knew he felt his rejection deeply, and they asked themselves if they had treated him as he deserved, seeing that times were bad, and they were backward with the rent.

The Squire's man had been among them, talking in a plain Conservative way about the truth of things, and their dependence on the family of Lumpkin; and when he went on to say that the Squire meant to pull down Pullborough at Michaelmas and build shooting-boxes for the Tory party, who were coming to stay with him in the autumn, they began to see clearly how selfishly they had acted.

"As for three acres and a cow," pursued the agent, in his smooth, genial way, "the Squire thinks you would all be better off in America than here. It's a free country, that is, and if you supported the whisky-shops liberally, as you'd be certain to do, you might all be presidents some day. All the land hereabouts belongs to the Squire, as you know, and next year he means to plant cucumbers within a four-mile-radius of the Hall."

"As for government by the light of common sense," said the agent on another day, "the Squire thinks you might like China better than America, for if you get in trouble there you can have your heads cut off without the expense of a trial; and I should like to know who ever heard of government by the light of common sense. No cabinets have ever tried it here, and, if they did, do you suppose the country would stand it? You have been bamboozled by a wicked Radical, and, if you want to know who the first Radical was, you can get the clergy to read you what Scripture has to say about the devil."

"If we had only known all this before," said the conscience-stricken electors, as they shook in their clothes, "how differently we should have acted."

They wished they could unlearn all their politics that Riley had taught them, and be back again in the dark and happy days when they knew nothing, and trusted in the Squire's assurance that the vote was of no use to them and he would see that they were kept in their proper station.

During three days they had all hated Riley, and now they began to think meanly of him; and they thought the least they could do, when they saw Gus come home from London, was to pull their hair at him and send their dutiful respects to the Squire, who was at that moment enjoying the agonies of a batch of Liberal poachers to whom he was reading a patriotic speech by an Under-Secretary of State, at every line of which the machine in which they were fixed crushed their bones.

When Gus had made his father happy by telling him what was in store for Riley, he went off on a surreptitious visit to Dorothy, to whom he meant to propose marriage, and get her consent to assist in the downfall of his miserable rival.

They kissed one another affectionately, for there was an understanding between them, and Dorothy said: "I know you think I have been flirting with Riley; and so I have, but it was all for the best. He wishes to marry me."

"I know he does, my ownest poppet," answered Augustus, smoothing her bright brown ringlets, "and so do I."

"I know you do, dear one," said she, adjusting her bright brown ringlets; "and so do others: but I could not honestly marry you both."

"I would not have you do it, darling, if you could," replied her lover. "Indeed, I would rather you did not marry Riley at all."

"And so would I," said Dorothy; "and yet, Augustus pet, he spoke so distinctly about the happiness which would attend our wedded life, provided our father—I mean my father—could be induced to make handsome settlements."

"But could anything or any one induce him to do that, Dorothy?" he inquired.

"No, Augustus," she answered, with simple truth, "I do not think anything or any one could."

"But let us put the case, my sweetest singing-bird," whispered Augustus, "that your hard-working and avaricious parent came down with settlements of a munificent, even of a generous description—let us suppose that he surrounded you with all that the tender heart of woman could desire, that you had everything in slap-up style, all round my hat, down to the ground, and up to the knocker, in a manner of speaking—think what a lot would then be yours! Doomed to live your whole life long in the midst of unbounded and unbridled luxury,

you would need but to ring your bell, and several servants would instantly present themselves to know the reason. Think you, fair one, that this would not pall! Would you not, ere a week, long to throw something at somebody, and would not the sense of your responsibility to your inferiors restrain you and be an unmitigated nuisance? How different, little bulbul, your fate would be, if you consented to wed with me. My father hates you, even as yours hates me, and neither of them would give us a penny. We should be compelled to borrow at a low rate of interest from persons who required no references. How this would stimulate our activity! How hungry we should often be, and with what pity would this inspire us for the sufferings of others! And then, when the tide turned, as I dare say it might, and we began to scrape a penny here and a penny there—what joy! Oh, my girl, my comfort, my pretty little simpering tippetiwitchet, and my pole-star, surely this is the life you would prefer?"

"Ah! my Augustus, my Augustus, my Augustus!" she answered softly; and, if she had said less, she could not have meant more.

"My own, my dewdrop!" he murmured.

He spoke rapidly, though not expecting to have got so far in so short a time; and if he had had the license in his pocket at that moment he might have done with her what he would. But he wished to act properly throughout, and he said: "My pippinest pet, let us do

nothing rashly, lest we come to repent it. Let us not be married till the bands have been called, and the moment the ceremony is over we will ask the consent of our parents to our union."

"How good and thoughtful you are, Augustus," said Dorothy. "Yes, that is just what we will do."

Then he went on to tell her of the scheme which was to confound Riley, and of the part they wanted her to play in it, which she gleefully accepted. What this scheme was I can not tell you just now, for here comes Riley himself, though why he has taken to dressing himself in this conspicuous manner I don't know, for all his bills are still unpaid, and this is what troubles him.

He thought that once he had got into Parliament to please Deemster, Deemster would allow him to want for nothing; the fact being that Deemster, having discharged his grudge against Sir Supine, would willingly allow him to want for everything. Riley had never troubled himself about his creditors in his hour of need, and now his creditors did not trouble themselves about him in his hour of prosperity. If you think that the way of the world is different from this, I have no respect for your opinion. They said that he must pay them, or they would make a bankrupt of him. I dare say you have been in debt yourselves, and know what it is to face a thankless creditor.

IV.

We are now again arrived at the British House of Commons. It is a very foggy afternoon in the middle of the season, and if the House is to deliberate in anything like comfort the lights must be turned on. By this I mean to say that though it is only half-past three in the afternoon, it is very nearly dark. A plain, shabby man enters the House, and gropes his way along, swearing under his breath, for he keeps hitting his shins against the furniture. It is, comparatively speaking, only a short time since G—y F—wk-s groped about in this way, with some powder and lucifer-matches, thinking to keep up the Fifth of November.

Is this, then, another G—y F—wk-s?

Hideous!

But, no.

Who, then, is this mysterious stranger?

What if he be no stranger?

Strangers are only admitted to the House under very stringent regulations.

"Why can't you say at once who he is, and put us out of suspense?"

I will say.

"It is the man whose business it is to light the House."

Ah! what a relief.

See! He lights it.

But for this man the House would legislate in total darkness.

Horrible!

But it is his duty to light the House, and he has lighted it.

He never fails in his duty.

He has a wife and family to support.

He is paid by the week.

Now we have a notion what the House looks like on the night of a great debate.

It was the night which Riley had secured for his motion to revolutionize the country in the manner already indicated. His head and his pockets were so full of his speech that the policemen on duty declined to let him in till he had submitted himself to be searched. He had some spirits under his coat-tails and some more under his waistcoat, for he wanted to impress the House, and they had told him this was the way to do it.

Old Mr. Deemster sat among the distinguished strangers in the gallery, with his spectacles well up on his forehead so as not to miss a word. It was this rich man of the people whom Riley was most anxious to impress, for if he succeeded with his motion he meant to ask Deemster for the hand of his daughter, and a blank check to wave in the faces of his creditors. He went early to be in time for prayers, and the Speaker was affected when he entered the House with both arms full of his speech. Young and tender peeresses sat in the

ladies' gallery, and craned their beautiful heads for a sight of the man who wanted to govern the country by the light of common sense. The reporters, with clean paper collars and their hair oiled, sat in a row up-stairs; and if you had seen them turning their ink-pots over their note-books, and sending off billets to the peeresses, you would have thought, as I often do, that the British Press is an institution about which a good deal might be said.

Crowds of people were in the street, and Riley's creditors formed a ring twenty-two deep round the House, for they had heard that if he failed he meant to go to foreign parts by the last train.

Rainger, bursting with his plot, was watching Riley from the other side of the House.

Four hundred and four questions on subjects which no one was interested in were got rid of, the number being fewer than usual that Riley might have his chance.

How often do we observe that something happens which was not expected to happen, and plays the very mischief with something else which ought to have happened.

If anything unforeseen were to happen now, Riley might be prevented from making his speech, his political career would infallibly be blasted, and this story would not end as happily as it ought to do, if you consider the reason.

At the moment when he was looking for the Speaker's eye, an attendant of the House entered with a visiting-card in his hand. He gave it to the first member he came to, and as it was fingered by one gentleman after another it grew duskier and duskier in hue. At length it reached Riley, who would like to have repudiated it, only he dared not, for he knew the House had seen him change color. This was Dorothy's card, and she had written on it a note in pencil, telling him to come at once and find her a seat among the ladies, for the minister's secretaries were trying to flirt with her in the lobby.

"What shall I do with her?" thought Riley. "If I leave the House now my chance will be gone, and Deemster will never give me a blank check."

What will he do with her? What would any of you have done with her? If only some one would rise and take up the attention of the House for a minute or two.

Rainger, who had never removed his eyes from Riley for thirty minutes or less, rose at this moment and asked leave to make a personal statement respecting the Begum of Cawnpore, whose relations with the country were just then somewhat strained. It was a subject to which many earnest men had devoted some of their best and purest thoughts, and the House became hushed in an instant.

Riley thanked God for the Begum of Cawnpore

(this was not her real name, and she did not actually live in Cawnpore) and rushed out; Rainger's attitude suggesting that he meant to speak for an hour and a half.

But this Rainger, though a thorough politician, was a very sly man, and when the door had slammed on Riley's coat-tails, he said he would not occupy the House above a minute, as he knew the hon. member for Pullborough had secured this night for an important speech on the reform of the Parliament. He made his statement, and sat down on the member next to him, and the Speaker called on Riley.

Riley did not respond, and when they looked for him there was no one in his place but a great glass of gin and water, and a speech written only on one side of the paper, and two feet high.

Riley, poor creature, was rushing up and down the lobby, asking all persons whom he met if they had seen a girl called Dorothy, with deep-blue eyes and a pink dress, this being the costume she generally wore. They had not, no more did Riley, though he spun round both lobbies in a twinkling, and revolved on his own axis till his head swam.

The House began to empty, it kept on emptying, and when Riley came back panting after his fruitless search, he met the members pushing one another out by threes, fifteens, and thirty-sixes. He charged them, he said he wanted to make a speech, he struggled, he got mixed up,

he was one man against six hundred, and they shook him up like medicine.

How seldom do we think of the adaptability of the human frame to all the pushing, squeezing, kicking, and tearing that go on in the world. If our skeletons were made of anything but bone, it is ten to one we should not live above six years at the utmost. If Riley had died at this age, his life might have been spotless, and he would never have had the humiliation of standing on the floor of the House, with some of his hair off, while the Speaker counted to see if there was a quorum.

For, as soon as he got in, and before he reached his seat, he had begun to make his speech, when a Secretary to the Treasury rose and said there was no House.

Then the Speaker got up and looked round.

Some members of the Government were sleeping on the front Treasury bench, and the Leader of the Opposition and three others were drawing lots for the estates of the nobility, for they thought if Riley's motion were carried the country would be divided up into portions.

Riley jumped up and down, and said he would have government by the light of common sense or die for it, and the Speaker went on counting, one, two, three, and so on up to twelve, this being the number of persons present.

Now, twelve is not a quorum, and the Speaker de-

clared the House adjourned, and sent the waiter for a cab.

It is no use struggling against constituted authority, least of all against the man whose business it is to turn out the lights, for you might be turned out yourself, as was the case with Riley.

The next morning "The Pullborough Truth Teller" printed his speech at full length, with "cheers" and "hear, hear" sprinkled up and down the columns, and said that no finer piece of oratory had been heard for some time. But "The Pullborough Truth Seeker," the opposition journal, also came out that morning, described the proceedings in the House, and said that Riley had never made his speech at all.

Riley's committee held a meeting, at which some one said there was a crisis, and that things must be looked in the face; and while they were abusing one another across the table, the landlord came in with a face like a mulberry, and asked who was going to pay the drink bill.

Then it transpired that all Riley's election expenses were still to pay, and they were heavier than usual, because he had said he would have no bribery.

Late that evening, a man with no baggage to speak of, and less hair on his head than he had been accustomed to, presented himself at old Mr. Deemster's, and asked for his daughter's hand in marriage and a blank check, on the ground that the country was in danger from a Tory Government which would have nothing to

do with common sense. Such a Government, said the stranger—a quiet, serious man—must be turned out with as little delay as possible.

As there was nothing to prevent old Mr. Deemster from turning Riley out, he did so with the help of his dog. The next day Riley issued another address to the electors, in which he gave them an impartial account of his conduct, and asked for a renewal of their confidence on the ground that Parliament seemed very well content with the present Ministers, who ought to be turned out. He said he would at once apply for the Chiltern Hundreds, and he did so, and got them; and a writ was issued for a new election.

But when the day of the election came, the only candidate was old Sir Supine Lumpkin, who got all the votes, and a few spurious ones besides. He said, in thanking them, that they might rely on it he would not forget their recent conduct, and he had hired some new gamekeepers to look after the poachers.

Augustus and Dorothy were married at St. George's, much to the disgust of their parents; and the electors expressed themselves willing that Deemster or anybody else should pay Riley's expenses, provided they never saw him again.

V.

For they were and are persuaded that their place in creation is a humble one; and they pray that they may

be kept in it. And they don't believe in government by the light of common sense, or cheap education, or free wash-houses; no, nor in the march of events, nor the Irish: and if any one goes down there again and offers them three acres and a cow, they will take him by the sleeve and lead him through the town, past the pump, the churchyard, the quiet little ale-house, and Miss Crump's Academy, and so on till they come to the horse-pond.

The company were grateful to the quiet man with the *pince-nez* for the hearty laughs he had given them, and congratulated each other on the process of evolution by which they had at last secured a story without either ghosts or murders. Their satisfaction, however, was short-lived, for they were betrayed into a political discussion very different in its character from the delicate humor which had provoked it. What was said, and who said it, may not be told here now that the incident has already become ancient history; but if the Novelist, who knew little about English politics and cared less, had not skillfully changed the subject in an athletico-literary manner, there would probably have been other broken things on board besides the shaft.

The Eminent Tragedian spent the next day alone, and only one little incident broke its monotony. After lunch he was standing by himself under the bridge, when he caught sight of a couple right up in the bows of the vessel. The two "look-outs" in their yellow oilskins and long sea-boots were stamping up and down their round on the forward deck; but farther forward still, in the very nose of the ship, a reckless young couple were seated, apparently enjoying to the full the novel excitement of their position. The lady was clad from head to foot in a long soft gray ulster, and a hat of the

same material was tied closely down on the masses of her bright hair, but proved entirely unable to keep the wind from playing havoc with it. She was seated on a low stanchion, so that only her head was above the bulwarks and exposed to the force of the wind. Her companion sat behind her upon the lower end of the great wire shroud running to the foremast head, steadying himself against the bulwarks with his left hand, and with his right grasping the shroud above his head. As the ship pitched, the couple in the bows went up until the vessel seemed to be stretching forward into a great green abyss of swirling waters, and then a moment later they went down and down, and the wave in front came rushing up the bows until it was within a few yards of them—a yard, almost a foot—and the two crouched low, and the man's hand slid gently down the shroud till it was just behind his fair companion, in readiness to grasp her if the rushing water should come any higher. Several times he seemed to relinquish with reluctance the necessity of putting his arm round her waist. It was a pretty sight, and the Eminent Tragedian was heartily sorry when the officer on the bridge caught sight of them, and instantly dispatched the boatswain to bring them back with a severe reprimand.

When evening came the appetite for fiction brought reconciliation, and, with many expressions of polite regret that they had not met earlier in the day, the company drew together again in a sheltered spot on deck. Little though they suspected it, the story they then heard was to be the last. It was this one:

LOVE AND LIGHTNING.

By HENRY NORMAN.

I.

When Mr. Tate had finished adding up the sums upon a number of pieces of paper scattered over his desk, and had found that the total could not be expressed in fewer than seven figures, and that the first of those figures was a five, his consternation was not materially lessened by the further fact that the other six were all naughts. And as he laid down his pen and pushed himself back from his desk, and looked up at as much of the September sky as the soup-like atmosphere of the city and the little square panes of his office window permitted him to see, he realized more accurately than ever before that he was playing a very big game indeed. He had been a "bear" for a good many weeks, and here and there, openly and secretly, confidently and doubtingly, to friends and foes, he had steadily sold Whatbosh Preferred, until he had reached this total of five millions of dollars, which now stared him in the face. There was no doubt about it—it was a big game. But the mere magnitude of the figures was not the sole cause of Mr. Tate's

consternation; he had often been a "bull" and a "bear" at big figures before now, and the consciousness of having sold five million dollars' worth of something he did not possess was not in itself sufficient to shake the nerves of an operator of his position and reputation. Moreover, he had gone into this with his eyes wide open—he had considered the matter beforehand in every possible light; something great had been forced upon him, and he had chosen his course after wrestling in calculation as many people would have wrestled in prayer. He had taken time by the forelock, he had grasped the skirts of happy chance, he had cast the die, he had crossed the Rubicon, he had burned his bridges, he had put his fate to the touch, he had taken his tide at the flood—sink or swim, live or die, double or quits, now or never—it was in one or other of these aspects that his enterprise presented itself to his mind, according to the literary recollection or commercial saw that served him at the moment. He knew exactly the risk he was running, and therefore the vision of the Stock Exchange, with its surging, shouting, mad, pitiless crowds, had already exerted upon him all its power.

But there was something apart from finance involved in those seven figures—something before which his nerves were as water, something which made his forehead feel damp as he passed his hand almost tremblingly over it. There are only two things which make real cowards of strong men—conscience and woman. And Mr. Tate's

conscience was thoroughly of the kind essential to a man who gathers to himself other people's fortunes by selling what he has not got, and buying what he does not want. As he sat there in the safe and sacred privacy of his inner office, with his luxurious roll-top desk before him, its pigeon-holes bursting with their bundles of papers of all shades of white, and yellow, and blue, his eyes rested on nothing more suggestive to the imagination than several scores of tin boxes stacked against the wall; but it was none of these that he saw. He had forgotten the Stock Exchange, he had forgotten the city, he had forgotten even the five million dollars, and he was walking down a long garden-path, with a little swinging gate at the end of it leading into an old orchard, and he was listening to a voice which seemed to him more like the music of running water than anything else he had ever heard, and he was trying for the thousandth time to decipher the inner meaning of its simple words. "If one only had the power," it was saying—"if one could only *do* something instead of thinking and thinking about it all day long, and sometimes praying—if one could only catch men's ears and make them listen and obey—if one had only some weapon besides one's longing woman's heart"—and he had replied with such trepidation as he had never known when waiting for the fall of the hammer on settling-day, which might make him almost a beggar, "I don't believe that a woman with such a heart, if she's willing enough with it, has much to do but accept all the power

she wants when it is offered to her"; and then he had felt hot all over, and hated himself for what seemed so coarse and presumptuous a hint. But the voice had only replied, "People say so very easily," and then it had stopped, and he had looked up to find a pair of large pale gray eyes looking at him, full of wonder, or suspicion—or what was it?

This was the problem beyond his solving; this it was that made his hand unsteady and his forehead damp as he sat among his papers and boxes; and this it was, too, that lay at the bottom of his consternation as he stared absently at those seven figures.

Nor was the problem solved this time, for a light tap at the door interrupted Mr. Tate's reflections, and, without waiting for any response from him, the door opened silently, and a slim, elderly man entered, and closed it silently behind him. He was elderly in years, for his semi-military mustache was gray, and his short, neatly-parted hair was almost white, but his sharp elastic step and straight figure, closely buttoned up in a dark-blue frock coat, might have caused him to pass for a general in undress, except, perhaps, for his deferential manner.

He stepped to Mr. Tate's side, holding a yard or so of paper tape from a stock telegraph instrument stretched out between his hands, and said quietly, "It has gone up again, sir."

"What has gone up? How much?" inquired Mr. Tate, incoherently.

"One and a half, since the market opened," replied Mr. Silk; for this elderly, soldier-like individual was confidential clerk to the great financier, a second self, to whose opinions in money matters he attached almost as much weight as to those of his first self, and whose quiet, deferential demeanor covered a mine of information, and a quickness of brain, and a clearness of judgment, which his employer had been glad to profit by for nearly twenty years. "Sixty-one and a half now, sir," added Mr. Silk.

"Do you know how much we have sold altogether?" asked his employer; and he handed him the slip of paper from his desk. "We can not sell much more, can we?"

"No, sir," replied Mr. Silk, quietly, "we can not; and if—" and he paused.

"And if it goes up for another few weeks—that is what you mean—we are ruined, of course—bankrupt—posted on the Exchange. Why the devil don't you say it?"

"The word 'ruin' has never passed my lips to you yet, sir," said Mr. Silk, with a touch of severity in his quiet tone; "but I was going to say, if it keeps on like this—"

"It won't keep on," retorted Mr. Tate; "it won't keep on, I tell you. If you have been with me through thick and thin all these years, and haven't any more confidence in my judgment than to think that I should sell five million dollars for a rise, at this late hour, I think it

is a pity," and Mr. Tate pulled the roll-top of his desk down with a bang.

Mr. Silk was too much accustomed to these little exhibitions of feeling, which meant nothing, to be in any way perturbed.

"I suppose you know who bought the last lot you sold, sir?"

"No."

"Leslie bought it at once."

"Damn Leslie!" retorted Mr. Tate, angrily. "The young fool knows no more about American Securities than a Hindoo knows about skates. He will live to curse the day he ever heard of it, you mark my word."

"Well, sir," replied Mr. Silk, with more independence in his tone than he had yet shown, "I have no doubt you are right; and I had hoped, sir"—he added, diplomatically—"that you were aware of the opinion in which I hold your judgment on financial matters; but I should not be doing my duty if I did not tell you again that I regard this operation with considerable apprehension. We have sold and sold in a rising market for you know how long; we can not sell any more, the market is rising still, and settling-day is not so far off. Mr. Leslie has made no serious mistake yet, as we know to our cost once at least, and he has bought as regularly as we have sold. I can not help fearing he knows what he is doing."

"Silk," said Mr. Tate, rising and laying his heavy

hand familiarly on his clerk's shoulder, "Silk, don't you make any mistake; Leslie doesn't know what he is doing—*I* know. As sure as my name is Tate, and as sure as you'll eat your Christmas dinner again with me, when people won't have Whatbosh Preferred at any price, I know exactly what is going to happen. But I won't tell you, Silk," he added with a laugh. "You don't deserve any confidences to-day. Just go now, and see if you can't sell some more before closing."

Mr. Silk turned and left the room as quietly as he had entered it, and his employer dragged an arm-chair near to the fire, for it was chilly for September, took a cigar from the mantelpiece, lighted it, and sat down to resume his meditations. But the thread had been broken, and no rippling voice and no gray eyes came back to his memory. The financier's thoughts had all gone back to the big game he was playing. The fact was, his life had reached a point at which it was accurately described by the antithetical expressions of which he had such a crop in mind. Both publicly and privately, as regarded his reputation in the city, and his relations to his bankers, as well as the fulfillment of a hope which was very real, although he had hardly dared to formulate it yet, the outlook for him was all or nothing. The Mr. Leslie, whom his clerk had spoken of so seriously, was a man nearly fifteen years younger than himself, and a comparatively late comer on the Stock Exchange. He had capital—no one knew exactly how much—he speculated heavily, and

with a nerve and apparent recklessness equal to those of Mr. Tate himself—almost always, too, during some time past, in the very securities on which Mr. Tate fancied himself most, and, as Silk had said, he had never yet made a serious mistake. His path, moreover, crossed that of Tate at a point that neither the confidential clerk nor Leslie himself had ever suspected, but which made Tate hate him with a hatred so bitter that, had it been known, it would have been remarkable even among the enmities of the Stock Exchange. In a word, Mr. Tate knew that the woman who had come, without knowing it, into his own life, blotting out everything but her own image, was the daughter of a house where Leslie was a frequent and a welcome guest; and the one time that Tate had seen them together in the garden as he was riding through the little Kentish village near which she lived, just for the pleasure of passing near her, had left no doubt on his mind what her relations with Leslie would be, could the latter succeed in controlling them. The scene had burned itself into Tate's memory as the lines are burned into an etcher's plate. They had evidently been playing tennis, and her face was flushed with exercise and pleasure. She was seated on a low chair in a shady corner of the garden, lazily swinging her tennis-racket, and Leslie was lying on the grass—almost kneeling, he was—at her feet, talking eagerly to her, and far too seriously, it seemed to Tate's jealous eye, for so trifling an occasion.

And now, too, this speculation was practically a duel between Leslie and himself. He was a "bear" and Leslie a "bull"; one of them could win only at the expense, probably the ruin, of the other. The few words and the look that day, walking down the path toward the orchard, had created in Tate's heart a great, passionate, almost blinding, hope, and this hope, even in the speculator's dull breast, had fed itself day by day in happy self-deceit and ever-growing confidence, as such hopes will. But, if he had misjudged this accursed American security—and as he faced the possibility of failure, all the shame of bankruptcy, the fall of the hammer in Throgmorton Street, the desertions of friends, the chuckles of enemies, the paragraphs in the newspapers, the wretched heart-breaking struggle of beginning life over again so late in the day—all these seemed nothing to him beside the thought of the collapse of this great, shadowy, self-builded hope. A ruined speculator—what more pitiful and shameful object was there in the world? If he won anything, therefore, it would be both; for Leslie, he reflected, would find poverty no less a bar to love than other men: and he, wealth and success no less an aid.

But, in spite of his confident tone, the conversation with Silk had increased his alarm tenfold. It was all true: as fast as he had sold, the stock had risen; he could not sell much more; he must settle soon. All these thoughts ran through his mind in growing confusion and incoherence; one consciousness only becoming clearer to

him all the time, and that was that something must be done. As he sat there staring into the fire, his head sunk upon his shoulders, and the pallor of his face contrasting with the gayness of his clothes and the sparkle of his too conspicuous jewelry, he thought how he had cut many a hard knot before, as he must cut this one now.

He was recalled to himself by his cold cigar falling upon the carpet, and rising hastily he found the fire almost out, the room dark and cold, and the rain falling heavily outside. An extraordinary resolve had entered dimly into his mind. He knew it was there, he felt that everything depended upon his not letting it elude him; but he seemed too dazed to grasp it or force it to take comprehensible shape. While he was leaning heavily on the mantel over the red embers, he heard the rumble of one of the last thunder-showers of summer or the first of winter, and, as he stepped to the window to see mechanically whether it promised to be a wet evening, he sprang back suddenly, thoroughly startled in his nervous condition by a long-drawn blue flash of harmless lightning. The electricity seemed to have entered into his very thoughts. With his heart beating loudly and his breath coming in short snatches, he grasped the back of his desk, feeling as though the obscure purpose in his mind were being shaped for him by some strange occult influence. Slowly it gathered definiteness and strength, till at last he found himself master of a great plan, a plan worthy

of his reputation, a plan to force his difficulties to bring forth success—a plan which should be crowned with the realization of his hope. The most weird of the elements had thrust its own surpassing light into the thickest darkness of his life. As soon as he had recovered himself, he threw on his hat and coat, and passed hurriedly into the next room, where old Mr. Silk still sat bending over his sales-book. Tate struck him almost rudely on the shoulder, and crying with a forced laugh, "Never fear, Silk, never fear! I know," he strode out into the wet, deserted street.

II.

If there is any latent poetry in a man, a September dawn in mid-Atlantic will bring it out. At one moment there is night, gray and cold, and little is visible but the faint outline of the rigging tossing specter-like overhead; at the next there is the "haze at sunrise on the red sea-line," and then great gleams of red, one after another, like repeated blows, come pouring over the horizon, until the vessel seems to be plowing her way through a sea of gold. There is an intoxication in the breeze that springs up, fresh hopes arise as boundless as the sea itself, and the past seems forgiven and all the future fair at the creation of this new day. The morning broke like this around the steam-yacht *Nirvana*, as she steamed along so slowly that there was hardly a handful of foam at her bows; but no one on her decks was any the better for it,

for the only person there was wholly occupied by something at his feet. He was a short, stout man, with the dark red face and heavy curling beard that come from exposure to the salt winds, dressed in the familiar smooth blue suit and peaked cap of an officer, and the lines of braid round his arm showed him to be a captain. His hands were buried in his pockets, and he was swinging gently up and down from the vibration of the steel hawser upon which he was standing, midway between the capstan to which it was attached and the hawse-pipe through which it ran into the sea. On this hawser his eyes were fixed, and no child was ever more engrossed by its see-saw than was this bronzed seaman by the movement of his rope. After a while he looked up, glanced round the horizon, and gently blew the little silver whistle that hung at his button-hole. An officer stepped out instantly from behind the canvas-sheltered corner of the bridge, and, in response to the sign of the hand which the other made him, rang the electric signal communication with the wheel-house. The *Nirvana* began at once to swing slowly round, and in a few minutes she was steaming directly back again over the course she had just traveled.

Ten minutes afterward a man stepped briskly from the companion-way on to the deck, and extended his arms as he took in a deep draught of the fresh morning air, and then cast a quick glance around the ship. It was Mr. Tate, not as he was in his office in Throgmorton

Street, but dressed in a smart suit of blue, and with a little peaked gold-laced cap perched on the top of his head. The salt winds, too, had blown the cobwebs from his head and some of the lines from his face, for his haggard and anxious look had given place to an expression so cheerful as almost to seem reckless, and a week at sea had tanned the paleness from his face. Catching sight of the skipper, still see-sawing on the hawser, he went up to him with a hearty, "Good-morning, Mr. Lilburn; any nibbles yet?"

"Nothing, sir," replied the skipper, cheerily; "the fish don't bite this morning."

"But why ever aren't you using a dynamometer?" exclaimed Tate, as he suddenly became aware that the skipper was bobbing gently up and down.

"The sole of my foot, sir," said the skipper with a laugh, "is better than any dynamometer that ever was turned out. I should feel it if we hooked a sprat."

"Well, all right; you know; only don't let us miss it. Are you quite sure about the position? Where are we exactly?"

"We are just over the spot, sir; I am quite sure of my ground—latitude 50° 22′ 30″ N., longitude 9° 34′ 20″ W."

"Well, the sooner it is over and we are off south, the better for us all," said Tate. "You know we reckoned upon picking it up either yesterday or to-day."

"Yes, sir; and we shall do it," was the confident answer.

"Have the crew any suspicion of what we are doing?"

"Not the slightest, sir. I have kept them below as much as possible. And you need not fear about the first and second officers after what you said to them yesterday."

"Yes," remarked Tate, with a self-satisfied smile, "I thought that offer would fix them. And King, too, I have squared him pretty completely."

"Is he all ready, sir, for any moment? Ah, here he comes."

A tall, thin man with stooping shoulders and straggling black beard joined the group, and raised his hat to the owner.

"Good-morning, Mr. King," said Tate; "the skipper was just asking if you are ready to begin at any moment."

"I have been quite ready, sir," was the reply, "any time for the last twenty-four hours."

"That's all right," said Tate; "you know everything will depend on you at the last moment. I'm getting rather anxious about the affair myself, and I wish we could catch the fish while we have got such fine weather."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the skipper sprang from the hawser with such suddenness as almost to upset Tate, who staggered back along the deck. "We've hooked it!" he shouted. And two shrill notes

on his whistle brought the officer on the bridge in a moment to the electric signal, which he rang violently, and the engines of the *Nirvana* stopped.

Mr. King had disappeared before Tate had time to exclaim, breathlessly, "Have you got it? are you sure?"

"No fear," replied the skipper, and, turning to the boatswain, whom the whistle had brought, he cried, sharply, "All hands on deck, quick! Now, sir," turning to Tate, "the time has come, and you've got to tell them. Remember, sailors don't understand long speeches—come straight to the point."

Tate paled slightly, and his hands twitched nervously inside his coat-pockets, as a crowd of seamen came running up in twos and threes, until there was a score of them.

"Now, my lads," said the captain, "the owner has got something to say to you."

Tate walked slowly across the deck and leaned against the capstan. "Men," he said, "oblige me by just listening carefully for a couple of minutes. When you shipped for this voyage on board my yacht you knew there was something more than ordinary pleasuring to be done. You wouldn't have got the pay you are getting if there had not been. Now the time has come when you will learn what it is, and all I have to say to you is simply this—whatever you see during the next two hours you forget it just as quick as you can, and forget it so well that long before we sight land again you

won't know you ever saw it. When you are paid off, every man who has completely forgotten anything out of the common that has happened on this voyage will get £10 from the skipper to take home to his wife. Do you all understand?"

The sailors looked at the masthead, and then at their boots, and then at each other, and a broad grin spread slowly over their faces. At last the spokesman of the crew gave a hitch to his trousers, and said, "Thank ye, sir; I think there's no difficulty in understanding of you. There never was a crew with such poor memories as us."

"That's all right, then," exclaimed the captain, sharply; and the seamen slowly dispersed.

The operation that followed took a long time to execute, but takes only a few words to tell. Tate's yacht was an admirably furnished one, and everything that nautical ingenuity or need could suggest and money could buy, was on board, and there were few of the fashionable European ports where her outline was not known to the harbor-master. But no luxurious private yacht had ever been engaged before on such a job as this. For half an hour the steam capstan went slowly round, and the hawser came gradually on board, till at last, amid intense excitement, the shank of a grappling-iron appeared at the surface, and, a moment later, a black, snake-like thing as thick as a man's wrist, disappearing into the water at each end, was hauled to the ship's side, firmly hooked by one of the five prongs. It was an Atlantic

cable. As quickly as possible it was made fast with chains forward and aft, the crew working at the difficult job as unconcernedly as if they had been on a cable ship all their lives. Hardly was this accomplished before Mr. King appeared at the head of the companion-way, followed by two seamen, each of whom held a large coil of gutta-percha covered wire on his arm, uncoiling it as he went, until he reached the ship's side. The skipper produced a fine-toothed saw, which he had evidently held in readiness, and with hands trembling with excitement Mr. King lay down flat on the deck, and, reaching over the side, sawed away at the cable, until in two places he had laid bare the copper vein along which the pulses of the Old World and the New beat in common. At two points a couple of feet apart he attached the wires leading into the cabin to the core of the cable. Then, rising to his knees, he took from the boatswain's hands a ship's axe, and, turning for a moment with a faint smile to Tate, who was standing by as pale as a ghost, he lifted the axe, poised it for a moment to take accurate aim, and let it fall gently on the center of the copper wire, cutting it clean in two. The two loose ends of the cable, being firmly lashed by the chains, had hardly given an inch. Having satisfied himself that all was right, King sprang to his feet and hurried below, followed by Tate and the skipper, the first officer remaining on deck to keep guard over the strange fish.

The scene in the cabin to which the three men rapidly

made their way was a curious one. It was a room usually consecrated to the ladies' use when Tate took his friends for pleasure trips, but now one end of it was blocked up with a score of Siemens-Halske batteries, stacked one upon another, with their forty wires twisted together and running under the table. The table-top was a mass of brass and ebony—twenty or thirty black keys all in a row, each surrounded by its little group of satellites in the shape of brass binding-screws. At one end of it stood a round, black instrument like a miniature light-house; from a lamp in the middle a thin finger of bright light pointed across the room, and at the other end a long, oblong piece of ground-glass was balanced upon a little pedestal—a mysterious enough apparatus to most people, no doubt, but not to an electrician like Mr. King, and still less to Sir William Thompson, who invented it, for the whole arrangement was nothing more than the familiar mirror galvanometer. The moment King had reached the state-room he had drawn the curtains over the port-holes, and by the time the others were well inside the room he had adjusted several of his screws, and was seated at the table before a sheet of paper with a pencil in his hand, intently watching the little finger of light dancing backward and forward upon the oblong glass.

"What is it?" asked Tate, under his breath.

For a few moments the electrician made no reply, then he read off slowly: "*Speaking—Sheffield—yesterday—Randolph—Churchill—declared—time—come—*

when—absolutely—necessary—sound—healthy—political —doctrines—be—placed—before—electors."

"Press message going through. Ah, we're all right; here comes a late stock message," and he read out a dozen quotations of well-known stocks and their prices in New York, which were being cabled to a great city broker. "In one minute now, sir," he added, turning to Tate, who at once unbuttoned his coat, and, putting his hand into his breast-pocket, produced a sheet of note-paper, which he unfolded and laid upon the table before King. A moment after, the electrician snapped a switch with his left hand, and began to work rapidly the large Morse key upon which his right hand had been lying. For several minutes nothing was heard in the cabin except the monotonous tick, tick-tick of the lever.

This is what the sounds meant to the man who read them off on the French coast, and passed them on to an office almost touching the Bank of England:

"New York, 1.35 p. m. Financial news of most startling character just telegraphed from West. Treasurer of Whatbosh and allied railroads, man of high reputation, implicitly trusted by all parties, fled Canada last night. Private investigation his accounts to-day shows not only enormous defalcations but astounding condition Whatbosh Railroad itself, which may be considered practically insolvent. This state things been concealed by treasurer for long period in order to extricate himself from private speculations. Receipt this news has caused panic in Wall Street. Whatbosh dropped twenty-five in half hour. Holders getting out at any price. Two members Stock Exchange Committee leave to-night for West.

News entirely unexpected, created general consternation. Effect on stocks be much worse to-morrow."

"That's all," said Mr. King, as he snapped the switch back to its first position.

"What, is it done?" exclaimed Tate, astounded.

"All done," was the reply; "I put it through after the last stock message, and now I have just told the American end to 'repeat last message'—that is, the one he has been sending here while I had cut him off. He will think, you know, that they couldn't understand it, and won't suspect anything wrong. Now, the sooner we get out of this the better."

The three men returned instantly to the deck, and Mr. King began the difficult task of splicing half a dozen yards of cable to the two severed ends lashed alongside. It was a long job, and darkness had almost set in before it was accomplished. At last, however, the cable was sound again, and very gently it was lowered down the side, and then slipped when it was well below the surface. The captain stood by the rail with his eyes fixed upon the water, and, the moment a sudden stream of bubbles to the surface told him all was adrift, he wheeled round and said quickly to the officer standing near him:

"Full speed ahead. Keep her sou'west, half south."

The bell of the electric signal rang loudly in the engine-room, and the *Nirvana* was on her way to the blue skies and smooth waters of the Mediterranean.

In his private state-room below Tate sat motionless,

his hands clinched upon the arms of his easy-chair, and his eyes gazing absently before him. For the first time since the inspiration of the lightning had revealed the element which alone seemed able to overthrow all the difficulties facing him, he was near breaking down, and remembered with something of horror the seven years' transportation to which he had rendered himself liable by breaking a cable in less than a hundred fathoms of water. But no weakness now, he reflected with relief, could interfere with the execution of his scheme. His crew had all been heavily bribed, and he believed their silence could be depended upon; the cable had been found, cut, and the bogus message sent, exactly as he had planned; Mr. Silk had been carefully instructed to buy instantly every dollar of Whatbosh Preferred he could get, as soon as the long-expected fall in price should come; the pretended news had been carefully timed to reach London so shortly before the closing of the market as to allow plenty of time to operate, but not enough to cable to New York for confirmation; Leslie would be deceived and would sell largely at once, facing the ruinous loss rather than holding back with the apparent certainty of still greater loss next day. And from these reflections Tate's thoughts gradually passed—"so near is grandeur to our dust"—to an old orchard and a voice as musical as running water, and in the soft light of deep gray eyes he saw the reward of all his desperate scheming and the fulfillment of his heart's exalted hope.

III.

As the clock of St. James's Palace struck midday on the Saturday a fortnight after the flash of lightning had brought inspiration into Tate's troubled brain, Charles Leslie was just throwing the last things into a portmanteau in his chambers in Pall Mall. He had packed in a hurry, and his bedroom was strewn, in the delightful recklessness of bachelordom, with boots and clothes and linen that he did not want, for Saturday was always a busy day for him, and rarely indeed did he leave the sordid City till a much later hour. As he pushed aside the curtains at the end of the little passage that separated his rooms, and entered rapidly, carrying his packed portmanteau, no one who had not seen him on 'Change would have taken him for a "City man," but rather for an athletic young university professor, or perhaps for a particularly studious officer on leave, for his pale, clean-shaved face and broad forehead, seeming all the paler by contrast with his black hair and slight mustache, showed signs of thought rather than the lines and hatchings drawn by the worry and ceaseless anxiety of the speculator. He knew how to dress, too, and as he stood by the mantel filling his cigar-case, wearing a tweed suit of the mixture which Cockney tailors call heather, with an Eastern handkerchief tied in a big knot at his throat, tall and stoutly built, few men and fewer women would have hesitated to pronounce him an unusually fine specimen

of a man. But Leslie had good reasons for looking his best to-day, as he took up his hat and coat, and drove off to Victoria on his way to the heart of Kent.

Hugh Ambridge, Esq., J. P., was a country gentleman of the kind which, without being exactly old-fashioned, is becoming rare. His family had owned the same place and lived on it for generations; their income had been small compared with the extent of the land which went by their name, but until late years it had always been about the same; a few of their distant relatives were distinguished people, and when they chose to renew the festivities which Ambridge Hall had known when its bricks were bright red and the big oaks which surrounded it now were pushing young saplings, the guests esteemed themselves fortunate, and preserved the occasion in their memories. The present head of the family was a fine old gentleman, with gray hair and whiskers and jolly round face. He always wore a tweed suit till dinner-time, and he stopped to crack a joke with every man, big or little, on the country-side, but familiarity with him bred nothing but respect, and you might have lived for years among people who had known him all his life, without hearing an unkind thing about him. For he had never looked at anybody otherwise than straight in the eye, he had never told a lie, he had never betrayed a friend, and he had never said a disrespectful word to a woman. Perhaps, after all, he was old-fashioned, for the men and manners of this latest age were not often to

his mind. In his case, as in the case of most men who, without thanking God for it, are better than their fellows, "cherchez la femme" would have indicated the source of his qualities, as those knew well whose memories went back to the days when young Ambridge and his wife, riding together, were the prettiest and welcomest sight for miles round. For years he had been a widower, loyally and frankly transferring all his love from the dead to the living—his only child Edith, to whom in childhood he had been a playmate, in girlhood a companion and friend, and upon whom, in her early womanhood, he was now beginning to wait like a lover. On this Saturday after lunch he had walked over to the stables to inspect a horse that had been offered him for her use, and he was just passing his hand critically down the animal's fore-legs when the rattle of wheels was heard, and the dog-cart which he had sent to meet Leslie drove into the yard. Mr. Ambridge and Leslie were good friends, for the older man saw in the younger something of his own past, and the younger looked up to the older with the hope that as years passed he might grow to resemble him more and more.

"Hallo, Leslie!" cried Mr. Ambridge heartily; "glad to see you, my boy—glad to see you!"

"Thank you, sir," said Leslie, jumping to the ground and grasping the big hand of his host; "I only just caught the train—very difficult to leave the City so early, you know."

"Pshaw, you young fellows with money on the brain seem to think fourpence wouldn't buy a pint of ale unless you spent half the day shouting one another's heads off. But have you had any lunch?"

"Yes, sir, I had something on the way down."

"Well, there's nobody in the house, and I shall be busy here for an hour, so you'd better take one of the dogs and the gun that I've put out for you in the hall and walk round the spinney. You'll be sure to knock over a rabbit or two, and perhaps get a bird on the way." Leslie hesitated a moment, for what reason Mr. Ambridge guessed perfectly, so he added quietly, "I don't know where Edith is; I dare say she's walked over to the spinney." Leslie's hesitation disappeared instantly, and he turned and crossed the tennis-lawn into the house. A few minutes later he came out again with a gun under his arm, and, stopping at the stables to pick up a dog, he took a short cut to the spinney, through the garden and down a long path leading by a little swinging gate into an old orchard.

As he walked across the fields, Leslie looked anxiously in all directions. It was not for the rabbits, however, for he had only brought the gun as an excuse for going off at once by himself, but rather because the last time he had been to Ambridge Hall had been the day in his life to be marked by a red rubric—the day which not to have lived is not to have known the chief thing that makes men better than beasts, and which nothing,

neither years, nor lies, nor tears, can ever efface from the mind of one to whom it has come in its fullness. It had been the day on which Leslie had first known that he loved, and first believed that he was loved in return. And he was now looking with beating heart for Edith Ambridge, that another meeting might reveal to him whether it was a fleeting mirage he had seen, or a real glimpse of green pastures and still waters. Not that any words of love had passed between them, or, indeed, any sign or symptom that could be told and weighed; only some of those minutest, impalpable testimonies which are as heavy as lead in Love's scales. It had been on the day of a country gathering, and there had been a dance in the evening at the Hall: but whether it was that she crept an imperceptible shade closer within his arm, or whether it had been a touch of the hand, or whether, again, it had been that subtilest tie of all, the absolute physical harmony of rhythmic movement in a perfect waltz, Leslie was fortunate in not being enough of a psychologist to tell; but whatever the source of his knowledge and belief, they were confirmed by one brief look, exchanged as he and Miss Ambridge said "Good-night," when all the guests had gone. This was all that had passed between them to make the heart of either beat faster at the thought of the other; but it was enough, for if there is one heresy more wrong than another, among all the miserable axioms handed down from generation to generation to make young hearts un-

true, it is the one which tells that love steals in with no more heralding than a thief in the night, and that they can not of themselves recognize his presence. Leslie knew that a communication of an infinite content had passed between him and his old friend's daughter, and he looked forward with keenly mingled hope and dread to their next meeting. It could not conclude, he was sure, without confirming or uprooting his own hopes, and with them the happiness and the worth of his life. He looked across the fields, however, in vain. Nobody was visible but a boy scaring crows, and a farm-laborer mending a gap in the hedge. He reached the spinney, and that, too, seemed deserted; so he leaned his gun against the gate and strolled down to the side of the brook running halfway round the wood, and began to gather the dainty harebells that grew along its edge. He was very happy, the flowers were plentiful and seemed to suit his mood, and he had a large double-handful of them before he stood upright again. He looked back to see where he had left his gun, and there, standing smiling beside it, stood the figure he had been looking for so eagerly a little while before.

Edith Ambridge was tall and slight, and very fair, and much riding had made her straight and graceful. Her large, pale gray eyes looked out from behind dark lashes, and the masses of her bright hair had once been not inaptly likened to "coiled sunshine" by a too enthusiastic admirer; for she had had many admirers, and

almost as many lovers, if the word does not imply reciprocity; but her heart had found a place for none of them, and it used to be said that she kept a little book in which she entered the date and circumstances of all her offers of marriage. How many men figured in that undesirable memory, no one knew; everybody of the neighborhood, however, could name half a dozen without difficulty. As soon as she saw Leslie spring up the bank she walked toward him, half shy and half stately. One of her rejected admirers, having nothing to lose, had once told her miserably that she went through a room full of company to reach the hostess, "like a peacock through a barn-yard," and it was really not a bad simile. Leslie, at any rate, was so much affected by her approach that he clean forgot all the formulas of greeting which he had cunningly prepared to say neither too little nor too much. He simply took off his hat before he reached her, and exclaimed, "Oh, Miss Ambridge, I beg your pardon for not seeing you before. I have been looking everywhere for you."

"I did not think you would come so early, Mr. Leslie," said the lady with a smile, possibly at her own tact in conveying at once so little and so much. "You've been busy," she continued, glancing at Leslie's flowers.

"Yes," replied Leslie, "I've been gathering them for you. They are the sweetest flowers of all to me, and I like them because so few people care for them and they

fade so soon. Do you know what they mean?" he added quickly, with a sudden and desperate resolution.

"No."

"May I tell you?" he said, in a low voice—

> "'The harebell, for her stainless azure hue,
> Claims to be worn by none but those are true.'"

Leslie paused a moment, and then holding out his bunch of pale flowers, he continued in a voice that trembled in spite of all his efforts to control it, "Will you take them, Miss Ambridge?"

Edith Ambridge had heard him with a smile, but it suddenly faded away at the tone of his last words, and her eyes fell before his earnest gaze. They had walked back to the gate by this time, and she leaned upon it with both hands, and looked away over the fields to the fast reddening sky in the west. But she made no reply, and Leslie knew that having said so much he must say all.

"I ought not to have spoken to you so, Miss Ambridge," he said, simply and bravely; "there was something I should have said first, and if you tell me I ought not to have spoken at all, I shall ask you to forgive me. But I can't meet you again as in the old days—they seem far away already. For a year now I have waited for this moment—just to tell you that one word from you will be all the world to me, that I have tried myself in every way I know, and that the love that has grown up in my

heart through all these happy—too happy—days here is the deepest and strongest and best part of my life, and will last as long as I live. I can't bring myself to say it —it sounds to me like such presumption—but oh, I love you with as faithful a love as ever a man has felt. To be with you, to hear you speak, to touch your hand—if I could only make you understand what it has been to me. If you will trust me, my whole life shall be one loving service. I know what you will say—the City; but I like it no better than you. I will give it up. I don't need to do it for the sake of money, and I will never go near it again if you will lead me away. My life is in your hands—will you direct it? Body and soul I am yours; I can't say what I mean, but—will you take my flowers now?"

For a few moments Edith Ambridge stood motionless, gazing absently before her as if the golden clouds had shaped themselves into an entrancing vision. Then she turned slowly to Leslie, her sweet eyes filled with all the splendor of the open heaven she had seen, and held out her hands. Leslie placed his flowers in them, and falling upon his knee he kissed them reverently with bowed head, "Edith, my love—my love!"

There was no more brook and spinney, no more green field and golden sky. Nature had added to her picture the one element without which, as a wonderful passage of Heine puts it, water is but wet, and wood fit for burning. Two more hearts had found the one best thing life

can give, and the eternal transformation had taken place again.

In the evening half a dozen men who had been at a dinner-party at Ambridge Hall were playing a last game at billiards. Leslie had only just come up-stairs, and had tried in vain to escape taking a cue. Old Mr. Ambridge was at his merriest, for he was happy at what had happened in his library just before dinner, and every time he passed Leslie he gave him a playful dig with his finger or whispered a word or two in his ear. "Come, Leslie," he exclaimed at last, with a comical smile, "cheer up, my boy; how serious you are to-night. Has something gone wrong with the 'bulls' to-day?"

"No, sir," replied Leslie, taking up the joke. "One 'bull,' at least, has made his fortune to-day, to my knowledge."

"Now, Leslie," exclaimed a sporting parson of the neighborhood, as Leslie was preparing to make a difficult stroke, "I'll wager you a box of cigars you don't score."

"All right," replied Leslie, bending over the table. As he spoke a servant quietly opened the door and glanced round the room. He went across to speak to Leslie, but, seeing the latter about to make a shot, he waited behind him.

"Told you so!" cried the parson, when the stroke proved a bad miss. "Cabañas, please." Leslie smiled

and turned away from the table. As he did so, the servant stepped forward.

"A telegram for you, sir."

Leslie picked it up, and, with a hasty "Excuse me" to his host, tore open the envelope and glanced at the pink sheet. He read it intently for a minute, then folded it slowly and put it in his pocket. He had turned pale, and a strange look had come into his face, but nobody noticed it except Mr. Ambridge.

"What is it, Leslie?" he said in a low voice. "Nothing bad?"

"I hardly know," replied Leslie. Then in a louder tone he added, "Would you mind taking my cue for a few minutes, Mr. Ambridge? I think I must send an answer to this."

He left the room and went down-stairs to the library. As soon as he was alone he took out the message again and read it carefully. It was from his chief clerk, and ran as follows:

"Message from New York announces extensive defalcations and flight of treasurer Whatbosh Railroad. Road said to be insolvent. Reports great consternation in Wall Street. Preferred stock dropped twenty-five in half hour. In your absence could do nothing."

Leslie read this message many times, then he turned quickly and rang the bell. "Tell the housekeeper I should like to see her for a moment at once, if possible," he said to the servant who answered it. "Will you have

the kindness, Mrs. Herring," he said, when that person arrived in some trepidation, "to find out if I can see Miss Ambridge again to-night for a few minutes? It is most important that I should do so, as I shall be compelled to leave the Hall very early in the morning."

Mrs. Herring had a shrewd suspicion of the state of things between her young mistress and the handsome gentleman who came so often from London, and this rather astonishing request confirmed everything. "Certainly, sir," she said, and disappeared.

Five minutes afterward Edith Ambridge entered the library, her eyes wide open with surprise and a smile of greeting for her lover all ready to break over her face. But a glance at him dispelled it instantly.

"Why—oh, Charles, what has happened?"

Leslie took her hand, and turning away his face from her gaze, he said in a hoarse voice, "I sent for you, dear, to tell you something that must not be put off. Please believe that what I am going to say is right and best, however hard it may seem. I am ruined. A telegram has just come telling me so, practically. Life is to begin all over again for me, and I shall be chained to an office in the City for many years, even if the best happens. I can not ask you to share such a life as I must lead—I love you too well. That's all—forgive me for speaking so—it will be easier to part now than later—God bless you for all—" but a great sob choked him here, and he turned away and buried his face in his hands.

For a moment Edith looked at him in silence. Then she laid her hands on his shoulders and said softly, "Look at me, love." Leslie raised his head and saw that her great eyes were running over with tears, but that her whole face was lighted up by a proud smile. "In joy, but not in sorrow?" she said slowly. "In success, but not in misfortune? In better, but not in worse? It is *you* that I love—what else do I know?" And closing her arms she drew him tenderly to her, till his head was pillowed upon her breast. Then she whispered, as she kissed his pale forehead, "No, my love, I will not let you go."

IV.

Little remains to tell. Early the next morning, Sunday, Leslie's chief clerk arrived at Ambridge Hall. Leslie himself had not slept at all during the night, and was down-stairs in a few minutes after the man's arrival had been announced to him. His clerk was standing in the recessed window of the library, looking out into the garden, and as Leslie entered hurriedly, pale from the shock he had received and lack of sleep, he turned and said cheerily, "Good-morning, sir; you must have had a bad quarter of an hour yesterday."

"Yesterday?" replied Leslie, in a low voice; "what do you mean?"

"Why, when you got my telegram about Whatbosh Preferred. But it's all right, sir. That's what I've come to tell you. Nothing has really happened."

Leslie drew a long breath, and steadied himself against the table. "Tell me, has there been no panic? I don't understand."

"Oh, yes," replied the clerk, with the importance that the possession of a piece of news always confers, "there was a very lively time in Americans just before the market closed. I was getting ready to go home, when a man from Jones Brothers rushed into the office, and told me they had just got a cable telling them that the Whatbosh Railroad had been discovered to be insolvent, and the preferred stock had fallen twenty-five points in New York. Well, you may imagine my feelings. Of course, in your absence I could do nothing, but I went across the way, and for a quarter of an hour there was such a time in Americans as I never saw in my life. As soon as I could get away afterward I cabled to New York about it, and a dozen others did the same thing. I waited at the office for a reply, but it didn't come until the telegraph-office here had closed, and there was no train by which I could reach you that night. The whole story," he went on, unbuttoning his coat and producing a bundle of papers from his pocket, "is a fraud. There's been no discovery in New York, and Whatbosh Preferred went up two points in Wall Street yesterday; but nobody knows yet how the report got over here. Some scoundrelly American dodge, I'll be bound. This is the reply I got from New York."

"All right," said Leslie, with a strange tremor in his

voice: "never mind that now; I'll talk it over with you later. Will you ring and ask them to give you some breakfast?" And he opened the long window and passed out into the fresh morning air.

An hour later Edith Ambridge woke to find upon her pillow a handful of harebells with the dew still on them, and a little note containing these words:

"Yesterday's alarm was all false. You alone were true, my brave sweet love."

She kissed the words and fell asleep again, and when her maid entered a second time she found her mistress still sleeping sweetly, with the pale blue flowers pressed to her lips.

As for Tate, he found a telegram waiting for him at the first port at which the *Nirvana* touched after heading south, summoning him instantly to London. But before he reached there he knew all. Leslie's accidental absence had saved him from the fatal sale upon which Tate had counted, and the only effect of the message the latter had dispatched with so much ingenuity and danger had been to prove to his rival the depth of the love he had won. Mr. Silk, however, had obeyed orders like a soldier, and had bought heavily right and left; but out of eight who had sold, five could not bear the enormous loss they had to meet immediately, and failed to meet their engagements. Forced to settle, Tate himself lost every

penny he had in the world, and after all the hammer fell before his name. The secret of the lightning, however, has never been divulged, and the advertisements of a broker with an artificially alliterative name appearing now constantly in the papers, and inviting the unwary to join all kinds of attractive syndicates and operations, are Tate's attempts, aided to the last by faithful old Silk, to retrieve at least enough of a position to give him leisure to spend a day in the country occasionally, and yield himself up to day-dreams of what he still believes might well have been.

This was the last story told on board the *Bavaria*. Early next morning a steamer was sighted off the port bow, which proved to be one of the largest vessels of a rival line. In response to signals for assistance she soon drew up alongside, and the first officer of the *Bavaria* boarded her to negotiate terms for towing. After some time had been spent in reconciling the views of the two commanders, an agreement was made, and an hour later the *Bavaria* was once more making her way rapidly toward New York. It would be of little interest to narrate in detail all that happened while the ships were in company. The experience was a novel and interesting one to the passengers, but its only relation to the present narrative lies in the fact that it effectually put a stop to the gatherings of the little party belonging to the Captain's table. Nothing occurred to cause further delay, and at breakfast on the third day the welcome word went round the tables that the Hook had been passed at daylight. At lunch-time the passengers were enjoying the beautiful sail up New York harbor, and after that it was not long before the party disappeared from each other's sight in the jaws of the Custom House, with many a hearty shake of the hand, and many a good

wish and congratulation that delay had been tempered by such memorable pleasures. The Eminent Tragedian and *Beatrice* proceeded to fresh triumphs; the Novelist gladdened the heart of his family and the pleasure-loving society of Newport for a while; the Romancer went West and squatted, and every one who loves good reading knows the delightful things that happened to him there; the Editor and the Critic and the rest followed duty and pleasure as fortune gave them opportunity: but the Tales in Mid-Ocean still remain unique in the memory of all. To one of the party has it at last been permitted to gather them together with a few words of his own for a wider circle.

THE END.

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